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ABSTRACT

Instructional materials on parenting skills for parents of adolescents are provided, with teaching guides for extension service agents. Organized as a series of five leaflets followed by five corresponding lessons, leaflets for parents concern: (1) a review of parenting skills and an overview of the course of instruction; (2) evolution: developmental stages of adolescence; (3) nemesis: challenges, pressures, and risks; (4) evaluation: values, goals, and decisions; and (5) conflict resolution. Leaflets offer facts, activities, guidelines, and reference lists. For extension agents delivering the five corresponding lessons, a lesson plan is provided for each session of parenting instruction. Plans enumerate objectives and materials, provide an introductory statement, describe learning activities for parents, and list references. (RH)

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REVIEW

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LEAFLET 1 IN A SERIES OF 5

This leaflet will help you:

- realize that you are your adolescent's most important teacher,
- review problem-solving techniques,
- realize that it is okay to ask for help with parenting concerns,
- know where to go for help with problems related to parenting, and
- understand the importance of families and friends.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us do the best job of parenting that we can. However, there are no perfect parents. We all make mistakes. These parenting leaflets will help you renew and update your parenting skills. They were written from experience and study for parents just like you.

YOU KNOW THE ADOLESCENT YOU ARE PARENTING BETTER THAN ANYONE

Everybody is quite willing to give opinions about how to be a parent. Often you get this information without even asking for it:. Each expert claims to have at least some of the answers to parenting problems. You cannot follow what every expert advises because some of the information is conflicting. The question is, how do you know to whom you should listen? The decision on what to do and whose opinion to follow lies with you. You can choose to listen to any advice you wish. You can decide which advice to put into practice depending upon your values, your adolescent's personality, and your situation.

In the end you have to use your own judgment. You know your adolescent better than anyone.

JUDGING INFORMATION

Most parents learn about being a good parent from their own childhood experiences and from reading. To which parenting information should you listen? Judith Myers-Walls, a family life professor, gives the following guidelines for judging and using information about parenting:

1. Recognize your own needs. For example, just because the information you are reading implies that all children need more responsibility does not mean that yours does. Your child may need what the information recommends if:

   - You have talked about the problem before.
   - The information makes you feel guilty because of what you expect of yourself as a parent, not because of what someone else expects.
   - The family described is like yours.

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2. Shop for good-quality information. After you decide that you do need help with a problem, look for information on which you can rely. Consider:

- The source of the information. Have you received useful information from this source before? If they claim to have all the answers, watch out!
- The reliability of the facts given. Do they sound reasonable to you? Check your local library for information about sources, for example, W.A. and L.S. Katz's *Magazines for Libraries: For the General Reader*.

3. Use the information in the best way to suit your own life.

4. Involve the family members affected by the change.

5. Write down what you are going to do differently and be as specific as you can.

6. After you have used the new technique for a while, ask yourself if it has improved the situation. If it has not, make another change. The best approach for you and your child is one with which you feel comfortable. Children respond differently to different techniques. Even a good technique may not work with some children. If what you are using does not work, try another technique. Do not give up. You may need to look for another source of help.

WHAT MY ADOLESCENT DOES WELL AND WHY

On the line below, write one thing that your teenager does well.

_____

How did your adolescent learn this skill?

_____

How did you encourage the development of this skill?

_____

OVERVIEW OF LEAFLETS

In 1986, a cross section of South Carolinians came to meetings conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service. These meetings were called to help identify problems in the state. Problems listed most often were teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, the high number of people in prison, school dropouts, the number of people on welfare, child abuse, and the breaking up of families. A special team of county agents and state Extension workers studied research on programs that had been successful in solving these problems in other states. This team discovered that a person's parents play a major part in how a person turns out. Yet, adolescents are influenced by their friends. As children become older, outside forces play a greater role. All children depend on their parents for love and encouragement. No one else can provide for these needs with the same results.

The team members put together the test results of other programs and the research on how people are affected by their parents. They discovered that the teenage years are very important to the development of a person. The Parenting Renewal Program for parents of adolescents age 13-19 is the result. The leaflet topics are:

1. Review of Parenting Skills
2. Evolution: Growth and Development

3. Nemesis: Challenges of Youth
4. Evaluation: Goal Setting, Decision Making, and Value Selection
5. Win Win: Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Limit Setting

In each leaflet there will be activities for you to think about and complete. Some of the things you will learn are:

- How teens grow and develop
- How to resolve parent/teen conflict
- How to solve problems related to parenting teens
- How to tell if your teen is in serious trouble
- What to do if he* is in trouble
- Where to seek support for solving parenting problems
- How to communicate with your teen
- How to teach your teen decision-making skills

You are your adolescent's most important teacher. What you do and believe influences your adolescent's future. As a result of reading the series, you can grow and develop new parenting skills.

PROBLEMS PARENTS HAVE

What are problems that parents like yourself might have under the following headings?

PERSONAL

_____

_____

SOCIAL

_____

_____

FINANCIAL

_____

_____

** The pronouns "he, she, him, her, his, hers" are used throughout the lessons interchangeably. Statements are equally applicable to an adolescent or parent of either sex.*

MEDICAL

_____

_____

LEGAL

_____

_____

EDUCATIONAL

_____

_____

SOLVING PROBLEMS

In the family situation, approach solving a problem in a calm manner. It is easy to focus on the punishment rather than the problem. Attack the problem - not the person. Those involved in the problem need to have input. Respect each family member for his contributions. Following these steps often leads to satisfactory solutions to problems.

1. Figure out just what the problem is. Gather information as needed. This means to look for the problem. Do not look at the results of the problem.

2. Brainstorm ways that the problem might be solved. Encourage all family members to suggest possible solutions. Build on ideas of others. Brainstorming is a way to find and list solutions. Some ideas on your list may be "way out," but that is all right. At this point the idea is to see how many solutions can be generated. This step is not the place to judge the worth of any solution. That comes later.

3. Now, carefully explore the solutions you have listed. What resources do you need? What may happen if you choose this solution or that solution? Do you need to use parts of two ideas to get everyone's agreement?

4. Based on the judgment of those involved, choose the best solution. Remember that no matter how carefully you list solutions and seek additional information about a problem, you will never know everything about the solutions. At some point in time the family has to make the best decision based on what is known at that time. If you wait until you have all the facts, you will never get the problem solved.

BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS

Please take one of the problems you listed and brainstorm ways to solve it. Write down 10 ways in the space provided.

PROBLEM:

_____

WAYS TO SOLVE IT:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Put a circle around the solution that would probably work best.

The best thing to do with any problem is to go through the steps listed in "Solving Problems." One way to come up with many alternatives is to ask more people to help you think of solutions. Remember to use the process on your next problem. And certainly you will have other problems.

Some people and families start through the problem-solving process as soon as a problem occurs. Other individuals and families feel sorry for themselves. They do not try to solve the problem. We do not know what makes the difference. We do know that adolescents learn attitudes about solving problems from their parents. The family seems to be the best and only place a person can learn to apply the problem-solving process to life's problems.

Family meetings are good places to show your adolescents how the process works. One word of caution—do not laugh at anyone's suggestions. If you do, you may stop that person from giving suggestions. Teens, as well as adults, have good ideas for solving family problems. Practice will help the problem-solving method become a habit.

SUPPORT IS THERE FOR THE TAKING. WHO IS ON YOUR LIST?

Sometimes guiding an adolescent is a tough job. No one has to do it alone, though.

Asking for help is not a sign of failure. It is a sign of effective parenting.

Through the years people have depended on each other in times of need. Even though Americans have taken pride in taking care of themselves, families and friends have reached out to each other in hard times. Families meet crises more successfully and recover from them

quicker when relatives, friends, and neighbors are available to support them. If this support is not available, we are lucky to have helping agencies.

You may need to arrange a conference with your adolescent's teacher, the guidance counselor, juvenile officer, or Department of Youth Services counselor. If you need financial support, food, or housing, try area churches and the Department of Social Services. What are other sources of support?

The Children and Adult Resource Express, CARE, is a database containing information to help families with adolescents. Your county Extension agent can help you locate services and service providers using the CARE system.

FINDING SUPPORTS

Write the name of an agency or an organization below and tell something about it on the other lines. You can find the telephone number in the yellow pages of the telephone book. Call them for the other information. If you do not need the services now, you may know someone who does. You may need the services in the future.

1. What is the name of the agency?

_____

2. What services does this agency offer?

_____

3. Whom are the services for?

_____

4. Is there any cost?

_____

5. How do you get the service?

_____

SUMMARY

All parents probably need help at one time or another. Friends, families, agencies, religious institutions, and self-made support groups are available. Sometimes the parent of another teenager can offer suggestions. Often you need only to ask. Of course, we always want to try to help ourselves first. Americans take pride in doing things for themselves; however, we can organize support groups and make friends before a crisis comes. One way to do this is by helping others when they are in need.

WHAT NEXT?

The next leaflet will be about the development of your adolescent. You will learn about normal growth and about helping your adolescent have a healthy self-esteem.

ADDITIONAL HELPS AND RESOURCES

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EVOLUTION: DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ADOLESCENCE

LEAFLET 2 IN A SERIES OF 5

Reading this leaflet will help you:

- understand stages of adolescence development,
- gain skills in applying child development facts to nurturing adolescents, and
- recognize how your own stage of life cycle affects your relationship with your adolescent.

INTRODUCTION

Parents joke about children turning into "monsters" when they reach the magic age of 13. Teenagers are thought to be rude, moody, unhappy, and generally impossible!

The truth of the matter is that research shows that about 80 percent of all teenagers are happy. Even with all the changes in their bodies and minds, most adolescents are confident, self-satisfied, and pleased about the new person that seems to be developing. (Farel, 1982)

In many cultures, a celebration or ritual marks the beginning of adulthood that we know as adolescence. In some ways this recognition may make the transition from childhood to adulthood easier. Then, at least in these cultures, everyone has a clearer idea of what is expected of the young person.

Adolescence is a period of time when teenagers:

- go through puberty,
- begin to use advanced thinking abilities, and
- take on new roles in society.

This lesson is about when and how teenagers grow.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ADOLESCENCE

It is important to remember that there is no "normal" person who reaches all stages at the expected time. People generally go through stages in the same order, but not at exactly the same pace. Your child may be showing some of the stages of a 15-year-old at age 14 or stages of a 14-year-old at 15. This is nothing to be alarmed about. If growth stages are very much out of order, seek outside help.

STAGES OF GROWTH

Look through the following developmental stages. Put a check by the items that apply to your son or daughter. If you have more than one child in this age group, think of one teenager as you do this activity.

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THE 13- TO 14-YEAR-OLD

___ grows very fast
___ becomes more clumsy (especially boys)
___ becomes more sexually mature
___ wants to look like everyone else (clothes, hair)
___ puts less emphasis on grades
___ feels insecure
___ spends most of the time with one or two friends
___ values friends' opinions more than parents' opinions
___ displays temper outbursts; tears are frequent

THE 15- TO 16-YEAR-OLD

___ grows more slowly
___ discusses differences rather than "blowing up"
___ thinks in abstract terms
___ bargains over rules, curfews, schoolwork, and everything
___ wants to make own decisions
___ tests ability to attract opposite sex
___ begins to take school seriously again
___ enjoys being away from home
___ begins to show individuality, but still group-oriented
___ acts like an adult one day, a child the next
___ believes that nothing bad can happen to him

THE 17- TO 19-YEAR-OLD

___ develops close relationships with opposite sex
___ increases attention span
___ becomes more aware of happenings outside own group (state, national, world)
___ begins to treat adults as people
___ sees consequences of actions
___ makes decisions concerning the future (school, career)
___ reduces concerns about the group opinion
___ dresses to suit self, rather than others
___ feels comfortable with who she is
___ makes responsible decisions (at least part of the time)
___ questions values and beliefs of parents

Are you able to see your teenager in the developmental stages?

Do you see how most stages overlap age groups?

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE

Development of the adolescent is affected by:
the makeup of the person;
his surroundings;
the way he reacts to others and how they react to him;
his ability to think and reason; and
the things he has been taught.

Adolescent development seems to be aimed at accomplishing four major tasks. We will talk about each task and how the developmental stages help the teen achieve that task.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #1
ESTABLISHING SEXUAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

The search for identity, according to Erik Erikson, is the main task of adolescence. He states, "The sense of identity provides the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly." Stress can be caused by the confusion about changes within his body, his increased ability to think and reason, decisions about the future, and new freedom. Most teens welcome the changes and handle them well.

One situation that may occur is that physical growth may interfere with intellectual growth. This accounts for the young teen who suddenly drops from the honor roll to B's or makes her first C in class. This usually corrects itself as the teen becomes comfortable with her "new self."

All the changes taking place can make young adolescents uneasy. Often they fear that their usual routine and families will be changing. This could account for their need to look and act just like friends. This sameness seems to provide security at a time when they feel all eyes are focused on them.

Fads appear to play an important role in achieving a positive self-image for the teen. You may choose to veto some fads as too costly or as unhealthy. You may be wise to permit other fads that can help your youngster develop self- confidence.

Sexual changes are both exciting and frightening. Ideally, parents have told their teenager about sexual development before this time. It is important that the teen feel comfortable talking with at least one adult about the feelings he has about the physical and emotional changes that are taking place. Hormones begin racing. Both boys and girls need to understand where to place limits on behavior. Talking, flirting, holding hands, and kissing are the first stages of experimenting with sex. All this is part of exploring the sexual development that is taking place. Most parents are uneasy about the teen's curiosity about sex.

Teens do not usually accept their parents' exact value system but develop their own. Yet, if the parents have established limits on behavior and are easy to talk to, the teen's values will probably be close to those of the parent's. Teens need to know why as well as what and how. This lets them know about the parent's values.

Parents often find the teen's thinking about himself or herself annoying. Teenagers spend hours in front of the mirror. They worry about pimples, hair styles, and clothes. This time may be spent admiring or criticizing oneself.

A young teen does not know what others are thinking. What he is thinking may be different. He assumes that every other person is as concerned with his behavior and appearance as he is. His own identity is related to how he sees himself and how he thinks others see him. This explains (in part) why teens are so critical of themselves.

This preoccupation with self is the result of the young teen's style of thinking. It occurs in all children. Remember that the teen's concern with what others think is not entirely unjustified. Young teens are very critical of one another and notice details.

The young teen feels that no one has ever felt the way she does. No one understands. She usually turns to friends, rather than parents, for comfort and advice. By the time she is 15 or 16, this attitude begins to change. She is realizing that other people have similar feelings. She no longer feels that everyone is watching her all the time. The period of self-consciousness is ending and the teen is beginning to feel comfortable with herself and others.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #2
ENDING DEPENDENCE

It has been said that the two most important things parents can give children are roots and

wings. The drive for independence begins when the infant crawls away from the parent to investigate a toy on the other side of the room. He comes back to the parent often just to "touch base." Then, feeling secure, he wanders off again. This is the process of roots (the security of the parent) and wings (the world outside the parents's arms).

When children are allowed to experience the world around them and make some choices and decisions for themselves, they begin to feel competent as individuals. Authoritarian parents make all the decisions and set all the rules with little or no explanations to the children. This style of parenting does not leave any room for the child to practice the skills he will need in being an independent person.

Permissive parents set no limits on a child's behavior. The child does not have to choose between anything; therefore, he does not develop sound decision-making skills. He may have problems getting along with others because he has never had to learn to give and take.

Authoritative parents set limits, but allow the child to help make rules and decisions within those limits. This style of parenting helps the child to see that other people have feelings and ideas that are important. It also gives teenagers practice in decision-making.

One of the biggest discoveries that teens make is that parents are people, too. Parents actually have needs and interests—and they will have a life after the teens are on their own. Children see parents only as they relate to their own needs. Adolescents become able to separate themselves from the rest of the family.

In order to become independent, teens must accept responsibility for and consequences of their own actions. As children learn to accept responsibility, they feel worthwhile, confident, and enjoy doing things well. When they reach adolescence, they are ready to move on to more responsibility. They have the confidence and skills to do so.

Most teens develop a belief in a kind of personal magic that will protect them from the bad things that happen to other people. Parents who understand this kind of thinking can take steps that will protect the young teen from dangers which she ignores. Belief in this personal magic, however, can make the teenage years difficult for parents and teens. Parents see by the young teen's behavior that she is neither careful nor responsible. The child, on the other hand, feels overly protected and wants to be treated as an adult. While no perfect solution exists for the problem, many parents find that giving the teen greater responsibility in non-dangerous areas (like selecting their own clothes or determining bedtime) while retaining control over more important and potentially harmful situations is helpful. It also helps to try to keep a sense of humor.

As the teen begins to think more like an adult, she is better able to form adult relationships with others. She can now think more realistically about who she is and where she fits into society. At about this time, the teen is likely to begin to re-establish the warm relationship with parents. This relationship may have become strained during the early teen years. However, parents must now be prepared to recognize that the teen thinks like an adult. The parent-child relationship can never return to what it was when the teen was a child. The task becomes one of establishing the special relationship that can exist between two adults.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #3
DEVELOPING A SENSE OF ETHICS

During late adolescence, we see a change in the teen's thinking ability. Teens develop the ability to think in abstract terms. They begin to grasp the meanings of such ideas as morality, democracy, and honesty. These new ideals can become obsessive. This accounts for the older teens who become involved with a cult or a religion. They are easily led by

those who seem to be able to explain the mysteries of life. Teens are especially vulnerable to cults at this time if they are feeling insecure and unsure of what they believe. The members of the cults offer acceptance and standard answers. To a confused teen who does not feel very good about himself, this opportunity to belong is too good to pass up.

Parents can help children resist groups with ideas that are extreme by:

- listening to the teen's emerging values,
- knowing with whom the teen spends her time,
- setting limits for behavior and activities and enforcing rules, and
- being a good example.

Example is one of the best teachers in developing a sense of ethics. When children see parents obeying laws and following standards of honesty and fairness, they are more likely to accept this set of ethics as their own. They begin to understand that rules are made to help people live peacefully with one another. Lying, cheating, stealing, and making fun of others seem wrong, not because the teen may be punished for doing them, but because others may be hurt by the actions. Some people never get to this stage of moral development. They are the ones we usually see in trouble with the legal system.

CAREER CHOICES

Helping those less fortunate than themselves and caring for the environment can become important causes to the older teen. Work in this area sometimes leads to a choice of careers. What opportunities exist in your community for teens to help others and to learn skills?

_____

_____

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #4
EARNING A LIVING

Most teens baby sit or cut grass to earn their first spending money. They learn to be responsible to their employer. They also learn that to be hired again they must do a good job. As they get older and move on to jobs with more responsibility, they must use the skills they have learned in earlier jobs. Such habits as being on time, being truthful, and dressing neatly carry over from one situation to another.

Some people know early what they want to do with their lives. Others explore for years before they find something that is satisfying. Still others never decide. They just take what comes along.

There are many opportunities for teens to explore career opportunities. Classes in school and various part-time jobs can give young people enough experience in different areas to make decisions in career choices. Parents can encourage their teens to take advantage of the opportunities. Training after high school is usually required for any job. College, vocational schools, and technical schools are reasonable options. Guidance counselors can provide leadership in helping the teen set career goals. Once the goals are set, plans can be made to reach them.

It is important to help young people think about the direction they want to take while they are still young. Even if plans change along the way, their lives are more productive if they have a goal. As the Cheshire cat in *Alice In Wonderland* said, "If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter much which direction you take."

CONFLICTING STAGES IN THE LIFE CYCLE

Throughout life all people go through periods of growth and change. When children reach adolescence, their parents are usually middle aged. This is a time when most people look at where they are in their lives and what they have accomplished. It is a time of evaluation for many people—a time for realizing that they may not be able to reach the dreams and goals they had set. On the other hand, it may be the time that one or both parents realize that if they are to reach their own goals, they have to concentrate all their energy on the effort.

At the time parents are coming to terms with their own personal limitations, children are blossoming into independent young adults with the world at their fingertips. This realization has different effects on different parents. For some parents, this is an exciting time for the family. They help the child discover who she is and how she can deal with the changes and opportunities that are available.

Some parents are threatened by the possibilities available to young adults as they see their own possibilities lessening. This threat can get in the way of the relationship the child needs with the parent.

Before parents can deal with the changes taking place in their young adults, they have to deal with their own feelings about realities of their lives. After setting new goals and feeling comfortable about themselves, parents can then direct some of their attention to coping with the beginning of adulthood in their child.

DEALING WITH ADOLESCENCE

Parents and adolescents need to recognize each other as human beings as well as sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers. Many times, we tend to deal better with people outside the family than with those in the family because there is less emotional involvement. Focusing on the individual rather than the kinship will be helpful.

It is important to keep the lines of communication open. This suggestion is like a two-edged knife that cuts both ways. The responsibility is two-sided. This means thinking about parent responsibilities and teen responsibilities to create good communication. In doing this, it is important to remember that communication means listening as well as talking. As someone once said, "nature gave man two ears and only one tongue," which is a gentle hint that he should listen more than he talks. In Leaflet 5 you will read more about communication.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Share with your adolescent the list of parent responsibilities and the list of teen responsibilities at the back of the leaflet. Plan time to read and discuss both lists and remember to listen between the lines as you discuss.

SUMMARY

All people deal with life better if they know what to expect. Adolescence does not have to be a stormy, unhappy time for children or parents. Knowing what to expect—and keeping a healthy sense of humor—helps everyone involved through the changes that mark the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood.

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TEEN RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✔ Try a little understanding. Everyone needs understanding, including parents, teachers, and grandparents. It is only fair that we try to understand each other. We all have needs and feelings and reasons for decisions.

- ✔ Spend more time with your family. Encourage your family to do things together.

- ✔ Listen with an open mind when someone is trying to get a point across. See the situation from their point of view.

- ✔ Share information about yourself and your feelings with your family. They may have experienced some of the same problems and feelings you have. Give them a chance to help you.

- ✔ Initiate needed discussions on topics that are hard for your family and you to talk about.

- ✔ Be responsible. You want your family to express trust and confidence in you. It is necessary that you live up to their confidence.

- ✔ Practice courtesy, consideration, and constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is simply and gently suggesting another way to do something. It is more more helpful than destructive criticism.

- ✔ Show concern and love. Your family needs to know you care about them. They are affected by pressures and problems of everyday living just as you are. Find nice things to do and say. Try to cheer family members up when they need a lift. Everyone needs approval.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✔ Try a little understanding. Everyone needs understanding, including teens, teachers, and grandparents. It is only fair that we try to understand each other. We all have needs and feelings and reasons for decisions.

- ✔ Spend more time with your family. Encourage your family to do things together.

- ✔ Listen with an open mind when someone is trying to get a point across. See the situation from their point of view.

- ✔ Share information about yourself and your feelings with your family. They may have experienced some of the same problems and feelings you have. Give them a chance to help you.

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NEMESIS: CHALLENGES, PRESSURES, AND RISKS

LEAFLET 3 IN A SERIES OF 5

This leaflet will help you:

- understand the challenges, pressures, and risks for youth aged 13-19,
- learn signs of problems for this age group,
- learn positive steps to help deal with problems when they arise, and
- learn how to regain confidence and trust after difficult experiences with their children.

INTRODUCTION

There are some things in which we are all more alike than we are different. Every normal human being has needs and desires.

Everybody wants to be "somebody,"
Everybody wants to feel that they belong,
Everybody wants to feel that they make a difference, and
Everybody wants to be better than they are.

Regardless of age, if we are two or ninety-two, we have these same needs. We may go about meeting these needs in very different and sometimes misunderstood ways.

Teenage behavior may be among the most difficult to understand or predict. This is an exciting time of life when change is taking place for both the young person and his parents. This leaflet is called "Nemesis: Challenges, Pressures, and Risks" because of the stress associated with parenting teens. Nemesis is an act or effect of retribution. It is "getting back." Often parents and teens act as nemeses for each other.

REMEMBERING WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR YOU

Memories are great gifts. Memories help us to appreciate, understand, and predict the future. This activity will help you remember more about your teen years. In the space below sketch the floor plan of one of the homes in which you lived when you were a teen.

Put an "X" where you slept.

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Write the menu of a special meal you remember sharing as a family.

Try to remember what life was like for you when you lived there. Did remembering the floor plan of your home bring back special memories? Yes No

How were you trying to prove that you were somebody?
That you belonged?
That you made a difference?
That you really wanted to be better than you were?

Here are other questions to think about.

What mattered most to you then?
Who were the most important people in your lives then?
What difference did they make?
What was especially good and what was tough about this time in your life?

Some of these memories were probably pleasant. Some were painful. How can we help young people move more smoothly from youth to young adults without too much pain? We want them to make the move with satisfaction to themselves and to us as parents. Thinking about their teen years often helps adults understand teenagers.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT IS LIKE FOR TEENS NOW

There are many challenges in parenting teens to young adults. Today, the world is more complicated than it was when we were teens. It is also different. When we were younger, communities were smaller. They were more personal. We likely stayed with the same group of young people from first grade through high school.

Today's families move more often. People of different cultures and values are among us. Television exposes us to violence and life styles far different from our own. It steals hours previously devoted to talking, reading, studying, and working. High technology, impersonal relationships, two parents working outside the home, single parents, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, teen suicide, automobile accidents, runaways, cults, the threat of nuclear war, unemployment, shoplifting, alcoholism, vandalism, anorexia (self-starvation), and bulimia (eating excessively and vomiting) are additional influences and choices that shape the world of today.

It is true there have been many advances that have improved the quality of life for most of us. However, we as parents often feel that the negatives that have come with change often outweigh the positives. It is easy to feel that outside focuses are more influential than family in choices youth make. This is especially true when we read about or see on television all the bad things that are happening. As one parent recently said, "You can't take all the credit, neither can you take all the blame for how your kids turn out." Many of us really understand that statement, for we know we are not the only influences on our children.

RESULTING PRESSURES ON PARENTS AND TEENS

Our parents had their struggles to work through as young people and we had ours when we were teens. It is helpful to think back on our own experiences and share these with our children. They will not lose respect when they hear of some of our mistakes and crazy ideas. They will feel that we are easier to talk with as we try to see life through each other's eyes.

We must listen with our hearts as well as our ears when we are dealing with our teens. Much of what we hear from them, that we think of as anger, may really be words of fear. Since we have talked about what it was like for us and what it is now like for our teens, let us think together about the pressures on teens and parents today.

Make a list of pressures on teens and on adults. For example, wanting to go to the beach without any grownups or wanting your children to be able to do what others do may come to your mind.

Pressures on Teens

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Pressures on Parents

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do the problems you have listed have to happen for every young person?

Yes ___ No ___

How can we tell when the pressures and problems are getting to be more than we can handle? This leaflet may have answers to the question.

ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH TEENS INEVITABLE?

The Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill has been a leader in the study of youth and parents. Their findings and other research indicate that the emotional problems of teenagers may have been exaggerated. It is encouraging to learn that they found that about 80 percent of our teens grow to maturity without serious problems. Serious problems show up only in about 20 percent of all adolescents. Usually serious problems show up long before a person becomes a teenager.

PARENTS AND TEENS

Dr. Laurence Steinberg, Temple University, shares these five ideas about teens and parents. As you consider them, think how you would vote. Thumbs up means you agree with the statement. Thumbs down, you disagree. Thumbs to the side means you do not know. Please circle the one that shows how you feel.

Yes	No	Don't Know	
			1. Adolescence must be difficult.
			2. Conflicts between teenagers and their parents are necessary.
			3. Parents and teenagers fight frequently, especially about big issues.
			4. Mothers suffer the "empty nest syndrome."
			5. Teenagers must get through adolescence on their own.

Steinberg calls each of these statements myths or mistaken ideas. Let us look at why.

1. Adolescence must be difficult.

Research seems to show that mental problems do not occur more often during adolescence than at other times of life. Problems are not more serious when they occur in adolescence.

2. Conflicts are necessary between teenagers and their parents.

Conflicts do often separate parents and teens. However, research suggests that teens who are close to their parents do better, no matter how we measure what "better" is.

3. Parents and teenagers fight frequently, especially about "big issues."

Steinberg's research seems to show that first on the list of what teens and parents fuss about is household chores. This was true 60 years ago. Second is the friends with whom the teen spends time. Third on the list is curfew. Fourth is school work. He says that the average teen and parents have an angry argument about twice a week. The average husband and wife have an angry argument about once a week. There appears to be no difference in the number of arguments according to whether it is a son or daughter. There is a huge difference in the number of arguments with mother and the number with father. You are right - mother gets the most.

4. Mothers suffer the "empty-nest syndrome."

This means that mother's mental health declines when the last child leaves home. Dr. Steinberg says just the opposite is true. Mother's total sense of well-being increases. If anything, it is the father who shows these reactions. The father may even develop what Steinberg calls "the empty-den syndrome."

5. Teenagers must get through adolescence on their own.

Not so, according to Steinberg. He says teenagers respond best to "authoritative" parenting. This combines warmth with setting standards, having clear expectations, and enforcing rules. He describes authoritative parents as both warm and supportive with their teenagers while being both strict and firm.

Now what do YOU think about these ideas? Remember even with research we do not "swallow" it whole. We "chew" on it.

Some behavior of teens is much more aggravating to parents than it is serious for the teen. Some behavior is so serious that professional help is required. Your children are the lucky ones for you are trying to learn the difference.

HOW CAN WE TELL WHEN PROBLEMS ARE SERIOUS?

Most parents worry about teenage years. They worry because of what they read and hear about. On the other hand, parents may think that the bad things they hear about can never happen to one of their children. We may not recognize symptoms of problem behavior as they occur. After a serious problem we look back and wonder why we did not see what was happening all along. One 29-year- old alcoholic told his family that he began drinking vodka at age 13. They now recall the earlier symptoms to which they did not pay attention.

SIGNS OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR TEENS

The following signs of serious problems have been developed from many resources. These signs were developed from study, experience, parents of teens who have experienced problems, and teens themselves. Discussing these signs should help us be more aware but not more suspicious of teen behavior. There is a fine line here that requires your best thinking.

- A noticeable change in usual behavior. Examples are lack of interest in other people, long periods of staying alone, sleeping all the time, or not sleeping.

- Mood swings. Examples are being extremely angry or extremely quiet and being almost too easy to get along with.

- Physical changes. Examples are lack of energy or too much energy, slurred speech, bloodshot eyes, change in appetite and resulting sudden weight gain or loss, frequent headaches, and needle marks on the arms or legs.

- Change of interest in school. Examples are poor grades, absenteeism, problems with teachers, loss of friends or no friends, frequent fights and explosions of anger, notes or phone calls suggesting that your child has become a problem or a misfit at school.

- Disappearance of money or possessions; appearance of money or new possessions unaccounted for.

Increasing lack of communication and a lack of openness coupled with unexplained absences from home.

You may be able to handle some of these behaviors if they appear. Some you may be able to handle with the help of friends, family, and support groups. Some may require help for the entire family from counselors and other professionals.

When one of our children is physically ill, we do not need to blame ourselves or feel ashamed to seek help from the doctor. Neither do we ignore serious symptoms and think that the illness will go away. We go for help from a source we trust. We do all that we can to provide the needed medicine and care when the teen is physically ill. Why should we be less able to seek help with behavioral and relationship problems?

CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE

We have not yet considered some of the important things that are happening to you as adults. Self understanding is basic to understanding others. At about the time your children are reaching their prime as teenagers, your energy may be dwindling. You may be facing disappointments in your career or marriage.

Now you may be parents to your own parents and feel pulls from two generations. Further, you may be facing the loss of close family members. You may be a single parent. At times there may be some feelings of jealousy. These feelings may stem from your children having more than you had at their age. You worked hard for what you had while they put forth little effort. They may seem to show little appreciation for what they have.

POSITIVE STEPS TO PREVENT AND DEAL WITH PROBLEMS

1. Develop a stable, nurturing home situation.

The basic source of stability for young people is their family. In a speech before the U.S. Senate, Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University spoke of his studies of the same youth over time. He said that the teenagers who had major problems during their teen years came from what he calls "disorganized households." These are homes where there is little consistency or routine. Such things as clean clothes, hot meals, or money for school needs are not there for them. Young people need to know what they can count on from parents as much as parents need to know what they can expect from children. A sense of order, routine, and structure is essential to positive growth. This does not mean being rigid. It means creating a loving and accepting situation that makes your teen know that he is important to you.

2. Develop a strong husband and wife relationship when both are present.

Research, common sense, and experience tell us that children whose parents have a strong husband and wife relationship usually do not have major problems. So often we focus on the needs of children and forget the original two in the nest. Children can be dividers as well as unifiers. Hopefully husbands and wives will still be together when children are no longer there. When this relationship is neglected, everyone suffers. (Single parents need to seek strong support from other adults, church, and community groups.)

3. Develop "What If" discussions with family members.

It is good that we cannot look into the future and see problems ahead. If we could, we might become overly concerned about the future and the present. However, it can be helpful to look at what may happen in the future with teens.

The following story will explain how this can help.

Jim had moved frequently with his mother, father, and older sister. He entered eighth grade in a new city and was anxious to make friends. He found that the group with whom he would like to associate was rather closed to newcomers. There was another group that readily took him in, and he accepted. Soon they decided to skip school. Jim's parents had entrusted him with a key to the house, but one of the firm rules was there were to be no visitors inside the house while parents were absent. Jim had more advantages than some of the group, three boys and two girls. They wanted to go to his house and he wanted them to know where he lived so he yielded to their wishes. They walked the four miles quickly and were hungry and thirsty upon arrival. Jim offered refreshments and then they asked to see the rest of the house.

The behavior quickly got out of control. Closets were entered. Clothing was thrown down the laundry chute. A comforter on the parent's bed was slashed with a knife. Jim began to protest, was tricked outside the house, and the door was locked to keep him out. Cigarettes were smoked, holes were burned in the carpet, hardware was broken on two bedroom doors, and water overflowed in the bathroom. When Jim was allowed back in the house, he was shocked and upset. He began to try to restore order. His "buddies" left him.

Over $5,000 damage was done to an almost new home, and the heartbreak experienced by this family was great. Jim said that he never expected things to turn out like this.

If this family had discussed and planned, this might not have occurred. Jim needed help in dealing with such problems as:

What if you find it hard to make friends at school?

What if you find that you are getting in with the wrong group?

What if you get into a situation that gets out of hand?

What will you say to your friends or friend? What will you do? Who can help?

How will you feel after it is all over?

How will your family feel?

Will you be willing and able to take the responsibility for your decision?

DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Wise parents discuss with teenagers dangerous situations in which teenagers may find themselves. Together they can make lists of steps to be taken if they find themselves in such situations. Write about one dangerous or troubling situation a teen may find in your community.

Situation Description

_____

Steps to be Taken

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Did you list the following situations?

What if you find that the driver of the car in which you went to a party is too drunk to drive?

What if your best friend is at the mall with you and does some shoplifting?

What if you are told, "If you really love me, you will go all the way."?

You can easily think of many other tough situations young people face. Planning and thinking ahead, even practicing what will be said, is a tremendous reinforcement. This helps the young person think through the situation, the possible results, and the after-effects. It also helps families prove they can count on each other.

4. Use Community Resources and Support

Single parents and families where divorce and remarriage have taken place have their own unique challenges. All families need other people to help them in meeting their needs. As Barbra Streisand says so well "People, people who need people are the luckiest people in the world." There are many times when an adult outside your family who is not emotionally involved can help you make it. A school teacher, church youth leader, a 4-H leader, or a family friend may be the one who sometimes can deal more realistically with tough situations for your teen. Ask for their help.

5. Have as few rules as possible. Be consistent and realistic in expectations.

There are some things that are firm and non-negotiable in most families. These basic rules represent values for which you stand. Other rules probably need to be re-examined as young people show more ability to take responsibility for their own behavior. Helping young people to become self-disciplined is the aim of good parenting.

Most of us can recall someone outside our family who was a special support during our growing up years. Write their names below, and jot down some things you would like to say to them.

A person who helped me was _____

Here is a note of appreciation:

_____

_____

_____

RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS AFTER SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Life must go on. How will Jim's parents ever feel that they can trust him again? How will Jim be convinced that he has been forgiven? Will there be a tendency to bring up the past?

What would you do if you were Jim's parents?

_____

_____

What would you do if you were Jim's sister?

_____

_____

Who else could be of help?

_____

_____

Tough situations can lead to increased individual and family growth instead of physical and emotional harm.

Jim will have to re-earn his parent's confidence. He must show them through his behavior that he can assume responsibility and independence.

All family members need to participate in the crisis. All are affected. All need to share their feelings, to forgive, and move ahead. A crisis can make a strong family stronger.

There is no value in looking back and saying "if only." Learn from the situation and say "next time." The important thing is to get through the crisis without serious emotional or physical damage, if possible. Parents must also erase doubt and lack of confidence. JIM MUST KNOW THAT THEY COUNT ON HIM AND BELIEVE IN HIM if he is to restore his own self-confidence. What else do you think needs to be done?

DISCUSSION WITH TEEN

Talk to your teen about dangerous situations in which she may find herself. Ask how she would handle the situation you described on page 7.

SUMMARY

Adolescence does not have to be a stormy time. If young people are involved in worthwhile activities, if there is good communication among family members, and if there is time for family members to be together and apart, the years in which a family has teenagers may be among the most satisfying times of all.

WHAT NEXT?

The next leaflet will be about helping your teen learn to make wise decisions.

RESOURCES

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EVALUATION: VALUES, GOALS, AND DECISIONS

LEAFLET 4 IN A SERIES OF 5

As you read this leaflet you will:

- become more sensitive to teens' life situation with regard to values, goals, and decisions,
- increase knowledge of the process of forming values, goals, and decision-making,
- learn skills that foster independent thinking and responsible behavior, and
- identify values, goals, and decision-making processes that mesh with your beliefs about parenting.

INTRODUCTION

Parents are sometimes unaware of when and how they influence the values and beliefs of adolescents. The goal of this lesson is to develop an awareness of values, goals, and decisions that parents may convey to their adolescents. In some ways, parents and adolescents are alike: both may be experiencing an identity crisis relating to their values, authority, emotional adjustment, and sexuality. In other ways, parents and adolescents are different - in their personalities and in basic orientation to life.

Most books on adolescence note that it is a time of identity crisis. Remember from Leaflet 2 and Leaflet 3 that parents of adolescents may be in a middle-age identity crisis themselves. This often produces conflict within families. Parents may be asking: Who am I, what have I accomplished, where am I now, and what does the future hold? The tasks and problems often interlock causing conflict.

A conflict may erupt between parent and adolescent values. Also, the parent may experience a value conflict within himself. You as a parent may have grown up with traditional values that are questioned by the adolescent. The teen may be questioning the values that she has grown up with and, at the same time, coming into contact with other teens who may have grown up with very different values. The adolescent may begin to rethink values, which may be shocking for the parent. The adult may react in a rigid authoritarian way as he tries to convince himself and his adolescent that he is right. At other times the parent may "give in" to a slight challenge from the adolescent. This may be confusing and cause the adolescent to lose respect for the parent.

CONFLICTS REMEMBERED

We have been discussing values, parents, and adolescents. Think back to your own adolescence. Was it a stormy time of conflict with your parents or was it relatively calm? Take a few minutes to reflect back to those years.

Jot down some of the conflicts that you remember experiencing with your parents. Beside the first list, write some of the conflicts that you may be experiencing with your adolescent.

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CONFLICTS WITH MY PARENTS	CONFLICTS WITH MY TEEN
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What are ways to group the conflicts and values? Research indicates there are five major areas. These center on values in the following areas:

Social life - friends or dating partners; choice of clubs, activities; how often the adolescent is allowed to go out; age allowed to date, ride in cars; choice of clothes and hair style.

Responsibility- performance of family chores; earning and spending money; care of personal belongings, room; use of family car, telephone, or other family property.

School - grades and level of performance/potential, study habits, homework, regularity of attendance, behavior in school.

Family relationships - general attitude, level of respect shown parents, relationships with siblings or other relatives.

Morals - use of drugs, drinking or smoking, language and speech, basic honesty, sexual behavior, behavior in regard to laws.

VALUES

Values are the deep-rooted beliefs you have about what is good and desirable about the way you live. They grow out of your experiences at home, church, school, or in the community.

A recent national report, "What Works: Schools Without Drugs," states as a federal objective that adolescents build a solid value system as an important link in the chain of drug prevention education. Adolescents need to learn proper values and stand by them amid peer pressure, according to the report.

BRAINSTORMING

Write factors that might play a part in the conflicts you listed above.

_____

_____

_____

The following list of factors have been shown in research to play a part:

Age of adolescent - Girls may be in value conflict with their parents over boy friends from age twelve up, with peak years at 14 and 15. For boys, the peak age of this value conflict is 16.

Gender of adolescent - Same gender conflicts intensify in adolescence. Sons and fathers are more likely to have difficulties than sons and mothers. Daughters and mothers are more likely to have difficulties than daughters and fathers.

Type of parenting style - Authoritarian homes are reported to have more value conflict about money, friends, and social life than authoritative homes. (See Leaflet 2 for definitions of authoritarian and authoritative.)

Economic level of family - Middle-income families are more concerned with developing independence and initiative, while low socioeconomic families are often more concerned with obedience, politeness, and respect.

Almost all adolescents want parents to have a genuine interest in them. They want attention, though not necessarily companionship from their parents. Friends and peers are very important to the adolescent. Adolescents value parents who really listen, try to understand, and allow them time to express themselves.

GOALS

What are goals? A goal is what an individual or group is trying to accomplish; it is the object or aim of an action. Even the very young have goals though they may not be able to state them in words. Have you ever watched an infant placed on a blanket on the floor who scoots, reaches, and stretches toward a bright-colored object placed beyond reach? That is goal-directed behavior! As human beings mature, their goals usually become more clear and mature as well.

Goals are aims toward which individuals and families are willing to work. They provide direction in life. No two families will have the same goals because no two families are exactly alike.

Each of us uses goals to organize our lives. Goals provide a basic framework for making many decisions. Goals relate to the way we live, spend time, and spend money. As was stated in Developmental Task 4 in Leaflet 2, "If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter much which direction you take!" The main point of goal setting is to decide what you want.

Goals change over time and that is to be expected. Some goals will be achieved and some may not if they are set too high or too low. Goals should be revised periodically. Helping an adolescent learn goal setting is a crucial task for any parent. Research has shown that adolescents with positive goals are more successful in coping with life.

Goals evolve from values - your ideas about what is important and worthwhile to you. Remember that values are the deep-rooted beliefs you have about what is good and desirable about the way you live. Each family member needs to develop an awareness of values and goals. This requires personal investigation - talking and sharing feelings much as we did under Conflicts and Goals. Allow all family members time to answer questions before a family meeting. Select a time for a family discussion when all members are rested and relaxed. Plan to spend about an hour exploring goals and values that are important to your individual family. Encourage all family members to participate.

TEACHING ABOUT GOALS

The process of teaching about goals involves several steps. This series of questions will help you and your adolescent identify goals to be achieved or problems to be solved and information to be obtained. Together examine the possible options, consider the consequences of each, and select the best option. Goal setting combines current wants with delayed choices for future enjoyment. Write one goal that your family has.

_____

Think through the following questions.

Is the goal realistic? Is the goal possible? Yes ___ No ___

Is the goal worthwhile? Is the goal compatible with your values? Yes ___ No ___

What will you be giving up to accomplish the goal? How will you benefit from the goal?

_____

How will your life change as a result of reaching the goal?

_____

Is the goal something you want? Or is it something that someone else wants for you?

_____

People are more dedicated to achieving goals when the goals are their own choice or when they have a part in the goal-setting process.

Is the goal specific? How can you measure progress toward achieving the goal? Can you determine when you have reached it?

_____

Does the goal have a completion date? Can you reach the goal in the time specified?

_____

For most people, goals are easier to complete within a time frame. A sense of accomplishment will develop as you complete goals.

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

What are some individual and family goals? The following activity may help you identify some of your most important individual and family goals. Complete the following activity, and then try the same activity with your adolescent and discuss it at a mutually convenient time.

Directions: List short- and long-term goals in the spaces provided below. An example is given for each type of goal. If there is not enough space to list all the goals you are considering, add an additional page.

SHORT-TERM GOALS	VALUES
Provide tutoring for chemistry	Increase sense of competence for adolescent Education

LONG-TERM GOALS	VALUES
Graduate from high school	Increase sense of competence for adolescent Education and better job possibilities

Goals represent a life plan. Attaining goals reflects and enhances the way we feel about ourselves. The methods we use to set goals and develop plans to reach them may vary. What is important is to develop a goal-setting process. Once goals based on values have been set, decisions fall into place because life has been given direction and focus.

DECISION-MAKING

"To be or not to be" - that is the question and has been since before Shakespeare's time. Most of us can recall the feeling we had as teens as we confronted some of the first major decisions of our lives. Questions that called for decisions about sex, smoking, cheating, and other values dominated our teen years. Fear, guilt, bewilderment, and anxiety probably entered into the mixture of feelings surrounding such decisions. Some things never change, while at the same time many, many things have changed. Many choices face today's adolescent. However, the process of making decisions has remained the same from our teen years to our teen's years.

Decision-making involves an awareness of personal values, the values of others, and how values affect the decision-making process. Skills in decision-making are important. Research evidence suggests that these skills help adolescents manage developmental tasks, situational stress, and inhibit patterns of self-destructive behavior, including substance abuse.

What is a decision? A decision is a choice to do one thing instead of another. All of us, parents and teens alike, encounter decisions daily that can be grouped into four categories:

A. Decisions not under my control
B. Automatic or routine decisions
C. Decisions thought about or needing more investigation
D. Decisions postponed until more information is available

HOW IMPORTANT ARE DECISIONS?

Have decisions you made recently been easy? Did you have to spend a lot of time thinking about them? Did you have to find other information before you could decide? If you are thinking about purchasing a new car or home, there are many decisions that you will face. For an adolescent, trying to decide whether to go to a four-year college or a two-year technical school is a major decision. A skilled decision-maker develops more alternatives from which to choose and has a better chance of achieving positive results.

All of us make decisions every day. Some are more important than others. Decisions can be thought about in terms of the types listed below. Some are 0 decisions, others are 5's, and others fall in between.

0 - I have no control over this decision.

1 - I make this decision automatically. I do not have to think about it.

2 - I think about this one a little before I make it.

3 - I think about it a lot, but do not need to find out anything else.

4 - I study about it and ask others what they think about it.

5 - I study, think, and ask others about this one.

CODING DECISIONS

Here are decisions a teen might have to make. As you read the list, decide how you think your teen would make them. Write the code number you choose after each decision.

Decision	Code
1. To believe in God.	
2. To drop out of school.	
3. To apply for a part-time job.	
4. To go to a movie.	
5. To tell the truth to a friend.	
6. To talk about someone behind her back.	

WHAT IS DECISION-MAKING?

Decision-making is the process of considering alternative solutions to a situation and then selecting the one that seems best. This means that you, either consciously or unconsciously, develop a system to rate alternatives. You need to decide from information you have gathered how desirable each alternative will be. Next, you weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

After weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each option, you are ready to choose the one that seems more desirable than all the others to help you reach your goal. The keys to making a good choice are a clear, unbiased method of gathering information about more than one alternative and an understanding of how you will rate each option.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The steps in the decision-making process are similar, regardless of whether the decision involves family or individuals. These steps include:

1. Recognize and define the problem. Recognizing the need for change is the most important step in decision-making. Sometimes it is difficult to recognize the real problem. Sometimes an "outside" person, a neutral third party such as a minister or counselor, may be helpful in recognizing the real problem. It is important to identify the real problem, not just the symptoms. When the problem is identified, you will be on the road to solving the problem.

2. Consider your goals. Remember the activity where you identified your long- and short-term goals? Use that information as you proceed in the decision-making process. As you make decisions, it is important to learn the skill of selecting what is important to you.

3. Look for alternatives. Make sure you look for as many alternatives as possible to solve the problem - not just the obvious ones. Creative thinking, reading, and talking to other people may uncover additional choices.

4. Analyze alternatives and consider consequences. One of the key elements of decision-making is looking ahead to determine "what might happen if ....." Consider the resources needed to carry out each alternative. How much time, money, skill, energy, and knowledge will be required? What must be given up? Every decision has an element of risk. You want to reduce risk as much as possible; however, reduction of all risks is impossible.

5. Make a decision. Look realistically at the possible alternatives and select the one that seems best for you in terms of your values, goals, available resources, and risks. If there is no "best" solution, perhaps a new alternative can be created by compromising or combining several of the options.

6. Implement the decision. Making a decision does not end with selecting the best alternative. After a decision is made, you have to put the decision into action. This requires an action plan that defines who has to do what, when, and where. Then the plan must be put to work.

7. Evaluate and accept responsibility. Accept the responsibility for the decision and the consequences without excuses. You will need to develop a way to make sure that the action plan decided upon is solving the problem and reaching the intended goal. If the plan extends over a period of time, it is wise to evaluate the decision at certain check points in a time schedule. If the results are positive, you should continue with your plan. However, if you find that your decision is not achieving the results you expected, you may need to adjust your plans.

DECISION-MAKING STRATEGY

Select a problem that needs to be solved and work through steps 1-7.

1. Define the problem. (What is the conflict or what issues are involved?)

_____

_____

2. Alternatives? What are the alternative solutions?

3. Identify consequences and risks associated with remaining alternatives.

Alternative No._____

Positive Consequences

_____

Negative Consequences

_____

Alternative No._____

Positive Consequences

_____

Negative Consequences

_____

4. Identify personal values influencing the decision. Identify any group or peer pressures that may influence the decision.

_____

_____

5. What are the available resources to carry out the decision?

_____

_____

6. Make your decision and list your reasons for this choice.

_____

_____

7. What is the action plan? What steps will you take to carry out your decision?

_____

_____

SUMMARY

Decision-making skills can be improved by practice and can make a big difference in your life and in your family's life. Decision-making helps you get the things you really want. The key factor is "making things happen" instead of just "letting things happen." The importance of helping your adolescent define values and establish goals will have a life-long impact.

WHAT NEXT?

In the next leaflet, we will be discussing Conflict Resolution. You will learn ways to resolve conflicts. Before reading the next leaflet, think about major conflicts that you would like to find creative ways to resolve.

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Have
you
ever
just
wanted
to
be
told
you
did
something
good?
You
have?
Gee!
How
about
trying
it
out
on
me?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

LEAFLET 5 IN A SERIES OF 5

As a result of reading this leaflet you will:

- . become aware of parenting responsibilities,
- . explore the importance of understanding feelings and needs of family members,
- . set family rules and limits,
- . recognize adolescents' need for positive self-concepts,
- . recognize that parent-adolescent conflict can be healthy, and
- . develop and reinforce communication skills.

INTRODUCTION

When people live together conflicts are bound to occur. A conflict is a disagreement. It is normal that parents and adolescents will not always think the same. However, it is important to work to resolve family problems as they occur. If not resolved, minor concerns may become major problems.

Solving problems within the family is not always smooth and easy. Often disappointments or conflicts occur because parents and adolescents expect different things. This lesson will help you gain skills in handling conflict.

RESEARCH

There is disagreement about whether adolescence normally produces more conflict than any other life stage (Hall, 1987). However, a high degree of conflict between parents and their adolescent is not healthy for the adolescent's emotional growth. Sometimes serious conflict causes a parent to physically and verbally abuse the adolescent. When this happens the adolescent may move away from home before he is capable of living responsibly on his own.

More disagreements between parent and child occur in early adolescence than before or after. Quarreling does not have to result in ending the relationship.

For parents of 10- to 12-year-olds, inconsistent and ineffective discipline result in high levels of problem behavior. The child's behavior and lack of skills may lead the child to be rejected by desirable friends. He may be forced to associate with similar, unskilled, and antisocial children. (Antisocial behavior is not being able to get along with others, not being able to accept authority, and not being able to work within the systems of society.)

In early to mid-adolescence, teens tend to associate with friends who are like themselves in areas such as age, sex, race, grade, neighborhood, drug use, school performance, dating frequency, and religious and educational aspirations. Those individuals who enter adolescence with a lack of social and academic skills are likely to choose friends like themselves.

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Careful watching by parents, along with firm discipline, does reduce association with deviant peers (troubled teens)! Problem teen behavior includes use of drugs, irresponsible sexual behavior, and school drop-out. Prevention is far less painful than cure.

In later adolescence, association with troubled teens happens most often when parents or adults are absent. Teens seem to sense that parents would not approve of certain types of individuals. Somehow teens manage to be around undesirable peers when parents are absent.

It is probable that severe problems of teenagers begin before adolescence. Sometimes conflict between parents and teens can arise over unimportant issues.

In Leaflet 3 we learned signs that let us know when teens may be in serious trouble. It is important to tell the difference between minor arguments and ones that could have long-range results.

Whether the arguments are minor or serious, the following conflict management skills will help family members cope with their differences.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The four main skills in conflict management are described in the paragraphs that follow.

1. Diagnosing the problem

Just what is a diagnosis? In sickness, a diagnosis is what the doctor tells you the problem is. In families we also have to diagnose. We have to determine what the problem is when there is conflict. The first step in conflict management is figuring out what the problem is and whether it is serious. Will it have a long-lasting effect?

For example, you and your teen may have different ideas about how clean she should keep her room. You must determine if this is serious.

2. Confronting the problem

The key is to look at the effects. What could happen as a result of an untidy room? If it is a normal day, you may decide that the problem is not serious enough for a confrontation. If, on the other hand, a prospective buyer is coming to look at your house, you may decide the problem must be handled.

If you do decide to confront the problem, the way you approach your teenager can determine whether you will be able to discuss the problem calmly and successfully. The most effective way to confront your teen is usually to begin by telling her what negative effects the problem has on you.

For example, say, "I have a problem and I need your help in solving it. The realty agent is bringing someone by to look at the house today. Your room needs cleaning up and I do not have time to do it. Neither do I feel that it is my responsibility to clean your room. The cleaner the house, the easier it will sell. Can you help with this problem?"

3. Listening to each other

You must be willing to listen to the other person's point of view. You must be flexible enough to accept solutions other than the "perfect" ones that may occur to you. Someone

said parents of teens must be like a willow tree that is able to bend with the wind. A willow tree survives more storms than an oak tree that cannot bend as much.

By showing your teen you are willing to listen to her and that you are willing to compromise, you can encourage her to do the same. You will be setting an example that she may pattern during her life. We will discuss more about listening later in the lesson.

4. Using problem-solving skills

Work together to come up with ways you can solve the conflict. Go for a compromise rather than going to win. Use the steps in problem solving listed in Leaflet 1.

In the case of the untidy room, for example, your teen may really not have time to clean it right then. She may offer to do a certain task for you at a later time if you will clean the room for her. If she does make a bargain with you, insist that she keeps the deal.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have learned how to go about resolving conflict, try the techniques in your own situation. Remember, it may be tough and take some time, but it will be worth it in the end.

Be patient. Do not pout and do not walk out on the discussion! If you become angry, say, "I'm feeling angry now. However, it's important to me that we work this problem out, and I want us to continue to do that. I need to have time to gain my composure. Let's continue talking about this tomorrow at such-and-such time."

A caring tone of voice and a positive attitude about solving the problem will be helpful.

If you end the discussion, it is your responsibility to bring it up again at the agreed-upon time. Once begun, continue to work on the solution until you come to an understanding.

Remember, you must work together and all involved must be flexible. Do not expect to have everything work out exactly as you would like. Remember, if one of you wins all, the other loses all.

LIMITS

Of course there are some decisions that parents cannot let teens help make. These are not negotiable. Until the teen is of legal age or until he leaves home, the parent is the one who is legally responsible for the teen's behavior. Young people want limits. Parents must set limits. Indifferent or unsure parents leave teenagers without the support they need to stand up to the peer pressure they experience. Laws and rules that must be obeyed are non- negotiable.

Non-negotiables are most effective when kept to a few items that deal with safety and deeply held family values. Adolescents respect firmness if the few non-negotiables are carefully chosen. Parents should explain clearly the consequences of violating non-negotiable rules and limits. Consequences should reflect the kind and extent of the violation. Rules, limits, and consequences should hold adolescents responsible for their behavior.

Non-negotiable limits are rules that are necessary for physical safety or that reflect strongly held family values. Examples are "no riding with drivers who are drinking" and "not going to parties that are unattended by parents or other adults." Non-negotiable limits are most effective when kept to a minimum and when the reasons behind them have been thoroughly considered and discussed.

Family well-being and the adolescent's need for learning to make his own decisions—autonomy—must be considered. This is especially true when making decisions on both negotiables and non-negotiables.

The teen can help make decisions involving expected behaviors. These could include curfew, homework, household chores, and dress.

Negotiables and non-negotiables should be re-evaluated regularly as the adolescent grows and matures. Rules can change!

It is most difficult for parents to decide how to give teens freedom enough to learn responsibility and self-reliance. It is a challenge to do this and still control behavior that is potentially damaging to the teen.

One couple wanted their teenager to be mature enough to live at home his last year of high school as another adult in the home. This had been their goal since the child was born. They really tried to treat the teen as an adult as often as possible. A real adult-to-adult friendship was the result. This did not happen overnight. These parents had worked hard to give this young man responsibilities just as fast as he demonstrated his ability to handle them all along. How do you feel about this family?

GUIDELINES FOR LIMITS

Here are guidelines to use once you have figured out the negotiables and the non-negotiables.

1. Remember, rules must be enforced. Can you and the rest of your family live with the rules and limits?

2. Have a minimum of rules.

3. Be sure rules and limits are logical and sound. Be willing to explain these reasons to your adolescent in a nondefensive manner.

4. Expect rules to be followed. When they are not, make it a learning experience. Do not convey the message that the adolescent is a failure. But do not excuse or ignore unacceptable behavior.

5. All rules and limits should be realistic and attainable. Always remember needs and abilities of the adolescent and family when establishing rules.

6. Rules and limits should be open for discussion as you see signs of adolescents accepting more responsibility and requesting more independence.

CONFRONTATIONS

There are many opportunities for confrontations between parents and adolescents. Here are some examples. Circle "yes" or "no" by each confrontation in your leaflet.

Yes No 1. A 15-year-old boy brings his girlfriend home for dinner and then takes her up to his bedroom. Should his parents make him leave the door open?

Yes No 2. Should parents allow a 14-year old girl to go to school braless?

Yes No 3. A 16-year-old girl wants to get birth control information from a family doctor. Should her parents call the doctor and tell her not to see their daughter?

Yes No 4. A 12-year-old boy steals a bike. His parents make him return the stolen bike. Do they have the right to insist that he go to the police and confess?

Yes No 5. A 13-year-old boy keeps love poems he has written to his girl friend locked in a drawer in his bedroom until he finds the right time to give them to her. The parents find out about the poems and discover the key to the drawer. Should they read the poems?

Scenarios such as these were given to 1,002 residents of Los Angeles who ranged in age from 17 to 94. About 42 percent of them were parents. The respondents were asked whether they backed the parental action taken in each situation. Following are the percentages who backed or did not back the parental actions— see how they compare with your feelings about the rights of adolescents:

1. The girlfriend in the bedroom: 84 percent agreed that the parents had the right to make the 15-year-old boy keep his bedroom door open.

2. The girl going braless to school: 71 percent said the parents had the right to keep her from going to school braless.

3. The girl who wants the doctor to give her birth control information: 70 percent sided with the girl and felt she had the right to obtain birth control information from the family physician. Note that the survey did not investigate the issue presently being heard in many state courts—whether parents should be notified before their adolescent daughters can obtain abortions.

4. The bike-stealing incident: 52 percent supported the boy who did not want to confess to the police.

5. The boy who wrote the love poems: 83 percent said the parents did not have the right to see the poems.

The majority of the persons replying supported firm parental monitoring and guidance in matters pertaining to adolescents' sex lives. Adolescents are more likely to be given autonomy in issues pertaining to religion, educational choices, and personal grooming (Borhnaledt, Freeman, and Smith, 1981: Corey, 1982).

COMMUNICATION

The next step in our growth as parents of teens is to fine tune communication skills. This will make conflict resolution and limit setting easier.

1. Giving "I" messages helps avoid placing blame. These messages offer us a chance to express our feelings about the behavior in question and help teenagers to understand our expectations. These messages may also offer teenagers a chance to explain their behavior and hopefully express a desire to change.

When using "I" messages, it is a good idea to state the behavior that you are referring to by starting with the phrase "When you _____ ," followed by "I feel _____," and ending with "Because _____."

One parent said to her 15-year-old when he came home late from school, "I worry when you come home late because I don't know if you are safe."

This"I" message includes three main parts:

1. The feeling: I worry
2. The behavior: when you come home late
3. The reason for the feeling: because I don't know you are safe.

"I" MESSAGES

We can already think of many situations where "I" messages would have been more effective than placing blame squarely on the shoulders of our teenagers. Read the following example and respond with an "I" message.

Tina insists on playing her new stereo as loudly as it will play every evening while she and her younger brother are doing their homework. Her mother objects to this behavior. How should mother express her objection? Write your response on the following lines.

_____

_____

(Suggested response - I feel nervous when you play your stereo so loudly. I believe we can concentrate better without it.)

2. Practice makes perfect. As we communicate on a daily basis with our teenagers, we should take time to think about what we say before we say it. This will prevent us from saying something we do not really mean. We may even practice what we are going to say beforehand. If parents get into the habit of practicing first, when emotionally charged situations arise we will carefully avoid saying something that may cause sorrow later.

EMOTIONALLY CHARGED SITUATIONS

There are situations that may be especially charged with emotion when communicating with teenagers. Let us make a list of these situations so that when they occur we can remind ourselves to STOP and THINK BEFORE WE SPEAK.

LIST THEM BELOW

_____

_____

_____

Did you think of situations that deal with sexuality, members of the opposite sex, or a parent who no longer lives with the family?

3. Make sure you let teens know what is most important to you.

Many times when talking with teens, a number of subjects come up. It is very important to let teenagers know what is important to us. However, it is a good idea to focus on one idea at a time. We must remember that we are letting our teenagers know what we expect. We are helping them to develop a value system that should be based on what we think will help them to develop into productive adults.

Therefore it is a good idea to always provide some kind of summary or conclusion when talking with teenagers. You may even question them to see if they are understanding your point of view and if they are in agreement with it.

4. Be direct and to the point.

Teenagers appreciate short messages. Long messages may be completely blocked out of their minds. Aim for results. Let your teenagers know exactly what you want. If it is a task to be completed, tell them what, how, when, and where, if necessary, in as brief a format as possible.

5. Observe signs of readiness to communicate.

There should be as few distractions as possible. Pick your times to talk with your teenagers. If your son is preoccupied with an important activity, this may not be a good time to talk.

6. Sometimes it is better to write it down.

When emotions are strong and the subject is painful, you may choose to put your feelings in a letter. People are usually impressed when you think enough of them to put your feelings in writing. This can be used with problems as well as with expressions of pride and joy.

LISTENING—THE KEY TO PREVENTION

Many troubled teens say that they just want someone to listen to them and really understand what they are saying.

Remembering the tips that follow will help us to be the listeners our teenagers want us to be.

1. Focus your attention entirely on the person talking. Listen as if you are hanging on every word. This does not cost you anything, but think of the cost of being uninformed about this most important person and his daily goings and comings. Think of the confidence you build by letting your teen know he commands your attention when he talks.

2. Avoid interrupting your teen. Asking questions is good because they help to improve your understanding. However, parents should try not to interrupt the teen's train of thought. It is very important to always work towards improving the lines of communication. If a person is having to defend what he is saying, he cannot be open minded.

3. Encourage small talk ... sometimes this is a teenagers way of warming up for a very important conversation.

IDEA

Work up an agreement or contract with your adolescent on one or more behaviors. What do you need to do to support your adolescent during the contract period? What will you negotiate? Can you both give a little bit?

SUMMARY

Parents need to be sensitive to their child's need for a balance between security and freedom. Family unity is most important as a kind of backup support when the teenager is trying to sort out issues that may be confusing to him.

REFLECTION

Now is a good time to reflect on the skills you have learned in these five leaflets. Write about some of them below.

I have learned that:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ADDITIONAL HELPS AND REFERENCES

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Peanut butter
sticks
to
the
top
of
my
mouth.
When
people
yell
at
me,
it sticks
to
the
depths
of
my
soul.
Thanks
and
have
a
nice
day.

REVIEW

LESSON 1 IN A SERIES OF 5

OBJECTIVES

To build a comfortable classroom environment by:
- informing the parents about the lessons,
- helping parents know what to expect from the series, and
- building enthusiasm for the classes.

Parents will:
- realize that they are their adolescent's most important teacher,
- review problem-solving techniques,
- realize that it is okay to ask for help with parenting concerns,
- know where to go for help with problems related to parenting, and
- understand the importance of families and friends.

MATERIALS

Leaflet 1 for each participant
Name tags
Pencils
Resource sheets
Display of agency materials

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

I am _____, and I work with the Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service. I appreciate your presence at the first session of Parenting Renewal. Your being here shows that you care about your adolescent and are willing to spend time improving your parenting skills.

Most of us do the best job of parenting that we can. However, let us all agree there are no perfect parents and that we all make mistakes. These parenting classes will help us renew and update our parenting skills. That is why this course is named PARENTING RENEWAL.

Even the experts have more to learn about parenting. None of us will know all of the answers to questions about teenagers, but all of us know some of the answers. In these sessions we will put together what all of us know and come out in the end with better parenting skills. Researchers know more today than in the past about which parenting skills work best with adolescents. I will share what I have learned through study and by being with adolescents. I hope you will do the same.

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PREVIEW - WHERE WE ARE

(Give pretest here.)

ACTIVITY 1

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Please select someone you do not know very well to be your partner. Move closer together and tell your name and where you live. Share the names and ages of your children. Tell each other about a person who influenced your life when you were a teenager. Then, please introduce your partner and invite him* to share who influenced him and how.

Let us make sure we know everyone's name. *(Have everyone sit in a circle. Ask the first person to give her name, the second person to give her name and the name of the first person. Then ask the third person to give her name, the name of the first person, and the name of the second person. State that this is a fun activity. Give praise to all who try. Assure parents it is okay to say "I pass." Avoid making parents feel bad; they might not come back for the next session. After you have called on everyone, ask if anyone would like to try again.)* Thank you for trying so hard to learn everyone's name. Names are important to people, teenagers included.

How did you like that activity? Were you surprised that you could learn __ names in one night? How did you do it? Why did you do it? Do people live up to what other people expect of them? *(Make the point that adults and adolescents usually try to live up to the expectations other people have of them.)* What if I had started by saying, "I'd like for you to learn everyone's name tonight, but I know that is more than you can do."?

YOU KNOW THE ADOLESCENT YOU ARE PARENTING BETTER THAN ANYONE

Everybody is quite willing to give opinions about how to be a parent. Often you get this information without even asking for it. Each expert claims to have at least some of the answers to parenting problems. You cannot follow what every expert advises because some of the information is conflicting. The question is, how do you know to whom you should listen? The decision on what to do and whose opinion to follow lies with you. You can choose to listen to any advice you wish. You can decide which advice to put into practice depending upon your values, your adolescent's personality, and your situation. In the end you have to use your own judgment. You know your adolescent better than anyone.

JUDGING INFORMATION

Most parents learn about being a good parent from their own childhood experiences and from reading. To which parenting information should you listen? Judith Myers-Walls, a family life professor, gives the following guidelines for judging and using information about parenting:

1. Recognize your own needs. For example, just because the information you are reading implies that all children need more responsibility does not mean that yours does. Your child may need what the information recommends if:

** The pronouns "he, she, him, her, his, hers" are used throughout the lessons interchangeably. Statements are equally applicable to an adolescent or parent of either sex.*

- You have talked about the problem before.
- The information makes you feel guilty because of what you expect of yourself as a parent, not because of what someone else expects.
- The family described is like yours.

2. Shop for good-quality information. After you decide that you do need help with a problem, look for information on which you can rely. Consider:

- The source of the information. Have you received useful information from this source before? If they claim to have all the answers, watch out!
- The reliability of the facts given. Do they sound reasonable to you? Check your local library for information about sources, for example, W.A. and L.S. Katz's *Magazines for Libraries: For the General Reader.*

3. Use the information in the best way to suit your own life.

4. Involve the family members affected by the change.

5. Write down what you are going to do differently and be as specific as you can.

6. After you have used the new technique for a while, ask yourself if it has improved the situation. If it has not, make another change. The best approach for you and your child is one with which you feel comfortable. Children respond differently to different techniques. Even a good technique may not work with some children. If what you are using does not work, try another technique. Do not give up. You may need to look for another source of help.

ACTIVITY 2

WHAT MY ADOLESCENT DOES WELL AND WHY

In Leaflet 1, write one thing that your teenager does well. In groups of four, share information. *(Divide group by counting off.)* Tell how your adolescent learned this skill. How did you encourage this? *(Allow time for this to happen. Call the group back together. Ask if anyone would like to share with the whole group. Make the point that you are pleased that the parents are willing to share with each other.)*

OVERVIEW OF LESSONS

In 1986, a cross section of South Carolinians came to meetings conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service. These meetings were called to help identify problems in the state. Problems listed most often were teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, the high number of people in prison, school dropouts, the number of people on welfare, child abuse, and the breaking up of families. A special team of county agents and state Extension workers studied research on programs that had been successful in solving these problems in other states. This team discovered that a person's parents play a major part in how a person turns out. Yet, adolescents are influenced by their friends. As children become older, outside forces play a greater role. All children depend on their parents for love and encouragement. No one else can provide for these needs with the same results.

The team members put together the test results of other programs and the research on how people are affected by their parents. They discovered that the teenage years are very important

to the development of a person. The Parenting Renewal Program for parents of adolescents age 13-19 is the result. The session topics are:

1. Review of Parenting Skills
2. Evolution: Growth and Development
3. Nemesis: Challenges of Youth
4. Evaluation: Goal Setting, Decision Making, and Value Selection
5. Win Win: Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Limit Setting

In each session you may participate in group discussions or hear short lectures. There will be some simple assignments. In the five sessions, you will learn:

- How teens grow and develop
- How to resolve parent/teen conflict
- How to solve problems related to parenting teens
- How to tell if your teen is in serious trouble
- What to do if he is in trouble
- Where to seek support for solving parenting problems
- How to communicate with your teen
- How to teach your teen decision making skills

You are your adolescent's most important teacher. What you do and believe influences your adolescent's future. Together we can learn and share effective parenting skills. As a result, we can grow and develop new skills.

ACTIVITY 3

PROBLEMS PARENTS HAVE

In groups of three I would like you to make a list of problems parents like yourself might have while parenting adolescents. *(Divide into groups and assign each group one of these headings to discuss related problems: personal, social, financial, medical, legal, and educational. Allow time for this activity. See Leaflet 1.)*

SOLVING PROBLEMS

A method of solving problems is described in Leaflet 1. Let us look at it now. *(Read together "Solving Problems.")*

In the family situation, approach solving a problem in a calm manner. It is easy to focus on the punishment rather than the problem. Attack the problem - not the person. Those involved in the problem need to have input. Respect each family member for his contributions. Following these steps often leads to satisfactory solutions to problems.

1. Figure out just what the problem is. Gather information as needed. This means to look for the problem. Do not look at the results of the problem.

2. Brainstorm ways that the problem might be solved. Encourage all family members to suggest possible solutions. Build on ideas of others. Brainstorming is a way to find and list solutions. Some ideas on your list may be "way out," but that is all right. At this point the idea is to see how many solutions can be generated. This step is not the place to judge the worth of any solution. That comes later.

3. Now, carefully explore the solutions you have listed. What resources do you need? What may happen if you choose this solution or that solution? Do you need to use parts of two ideas to get everyone's agreement?

4. Based on the judgment of those involved, choose the best solution. Remember that no matter how carefully you list solutions and seek additional information about a problem, you will never know everything about the solutions. At some point in time the family has to make the best decision based on what is known at that time. If you wait until you have all the facts, you will never get the problem solved.

ACTIVITY 4

BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS

Please take one of the problems you listed and brainstorm ways to solve it. Write down 10 ways in the space provided in Leaflet 1. *(You may offer a small prize to the group that thinks of 10 solutions first.)* Now, please choose the one solution that would have the best chance of working. *(Ask someone from each group to share with the large group some of the things that happened in the small group.)* The best thing to do with any problem is to go through the steps listed in "Solving Problems." One way to come up with many alternatives is to ask more people to help you think of solutions. I hope you will remember to use the process on your next problem. And certainly you will have other problems.

Some people and families start through the problem-solving process as soon as a problem occurs. Other individuals and families feel sorry for themselves. They do not try to solve the problem. We do not know what makes the difference. We do know that adolescents learn attitudes about solving problems from their parents. The family seems to be the best and sometimes only place a person can learn to apply the problem-solving process to life's problems.

Family meetings are good places to show your adolescents how the process works. One word of caution—do not laugh at anyone's suggestions. If you do, you may stop that person from giving suggestions. Teens, as well as adults, have good ideas for solving family problems. Practice will help the problem- solving method become a habit.

SUPPORT IS THERE FOR THE TAKING. WHO IS ON YOUR LIST?

Sometimes guiding an adolescent is a tough job. No one has to do it alone, though.

Asking for help is not a sign of failure. It is a sign of effective parenting.

Through the years people have depended on each other in times of need. Even though Americans have taken pride in taking care of themselves, families and friends have reached out to each other in hard times. Families meet crises more successfully and recover from them quicker when relatives, friends, and neighbors are available to support them. If this support is not available, we are lucky to have helping agencies.

You may need to arrange a conference with your adolescent's teacher, the guidance counselor, juvenile officer, or Department of Youth Services counselor. If you need financial support, food, or housing, try area churches and the Department of Social Services. What are other sources of support?

(Give out resource sheets. Go over them and see if there are any questions.)

The Children and Adult Resource Express, CARE, is a database containing information to help families with adolescents. Your county Extension agent can help you locate services and service providers using the CARE system. *(You may give a demonstration of CARE here.)*

SUMMARY

All parents probably need help at one time or another. Friends, families, agencies, religious institutions, and self-made support groups are available. Sometimes the parent of another teenager can offer suggestions. Often you need only to ask. Of course, we always want to try to help ourselves first. Americans take pride in doing things for themselves; however, we can organize support groups and make friends before a crisis comes. One way to do this is by helping others when they are in need.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THIS LESSON

(Invite agency people to discuss their services.)

(Invite parents to come to the Extension office for other programs and information.)

ACTIVITY 5

Homework: Finding Supports

Investigate the services of one agency before the next lesson.

(See Leaflet 1.)

1. What is the name of the agency?
2. What services does this agency offer?
3. Whom are the services for?
4. Is there any cost?
5. How do you get the service?

WHAT NEXT?

The next lesson will be about the development of your adolescent. You will learn about normal growth and about helping your adolescent have a healthy self-esteem.

ADDITIONAL HELPS AND RESOURCES

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EVOLUTION: DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ADOLESCENCE

LESSON 2 IN A SERIES OF 5

OBJECTIVES

Parents will:
- understand stages of adolescence development,
- gain skills in applying child development facts to nurturing adolescents, and
- recognize how their own stage of life cycle affects their relationship with their adolescent child.

MATERIALS

Filmstrip
Name tags
Leaflet 2 for each participant

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

Parents joke about children turning into "monsters" when they reach the magic age of 13. Teenagers are thought to be rude, moody, unhappy, and generally impossible!

The truth of the matter is that research shows that about 85 percent of all teenagers are happy. Even with all the changes in their bodies and minds, most adolescents are confident, self-satisfied, and pleased about the new person that seems to be developing. (Farel, 1982)

In many cultures, a celebration or ritual marks the beginning of adulthood that we know as adolescence. In some ways this recognition may make the transition from childhood to adulthood easier. Then, at least in these cultures, everyone has a clearer idea of what is expected of the young person.

Adolescence is a period of time when teenagers:
- go through puberty.
- begin to use advanced thinking abilities.
- take on new roles in society.

This lesson is about when and how teenagers grow.

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ACTIVITY 1

SHARING TIME

Before we begin this session we will review our last lesson. Please tell the group what you found out about an agency. What is the name of the agency? What do they offer? Who are the services for? *(Have information on two or three agencies ready to share if no one else does. Thank each person who responds.)*

Now for today's lesson—

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF ADOLESCENCE

It is important to remember that there is no "normal" person who reaches all stages at the expected time. People generally go through stages in the same order, but not at exactly the same pace. Your child may be showing some of the stages of a 15-year-old at age 14 or stages of a 14-year-old at 15. This is nothing to be alarmed about. If growth stages are very much out of order, seek outside help. *(See Lesson 1 for possible sources of help.)*

ACTIVITY 2

STAGES OF GROWTH

Look through the developmental stages listed in Leaflet 2. *(Give out Leaflet 2 and allow time for the activity.)* Put a check by the items that apply to your son or daughter. If you have more than one child in this age group, think of one teenager as you do this activity.

THE 13- TO 14-YEAR-OLD

___ grows very fast
___ becomes more clumsy (especially boys)
___ becomes more sexually mature
___ wants to look like everyone else (clothes, hair)
___ puts less emphasis on grades
___ feels insecure
___ spends most of the time with one or two friends
___ values friends' opinions more than parents' opinions
___ displays temper outbursts; tears are frequent

THE 15- TO 16-YEAR-OLD

___ grows more slowly
___ discusses differences rather than "blowing up"
___ thinks in abstract terms
___ bargains over rules, curfews, schoolwork, and everything
___ wants to make own decisions
___ tests ability to attract opposite sex
___ begins to take school seriously again
___ enjoys being away from home
___ begins to show individuality, but still group-oriented
___ acts like an adult one day, a child the next
___ believes that nothing bad can happen to him

THE 17- TO 19-YEAR-OLD

___ develops close relationships with opposite sex
___ increases attention span
___ becomes more aware of happenings outside own group (state, national, world)
___ begins to treat adults as people
___ sees consequences of actions
___ makes decisions concerning the future (school, career)
___ reduces concerns about the group opinion
___ dresses to suit self, rather than others
___ feels comfortable with who she is
___ makes responsible decisions (at least part of the time)
___ questions values and beliefs of parents

Are you able to see your teenager in the developmental stages?

Do you see how most stages overlap age groups?

ACTIVITY 3 *(OPTIONAL)*

FILM

We will look at a filmstrip/video tape on stages of adolescent development. It will explain ideas from different people about adolescence. As with all theories concerning people, every idea does not apply to every person. There will be ideas in the visual that you can relate to immediately. You can store others in your mind for future reference.

(After showing the film, lead a discussion.)

What points stand out in your mind after seeing the visual?

How were you able to see where your adolescent is in development?

What did you learn that will be helpful in coping with your teenager?

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE

Development of the adolescent is affected by:

The makeup of the person; his surroundings; the way he reacts to others and how they react to him; his ability to think and reason; and the things he has been taught.

Adolescent development seems to be aimed at accomplishing four major tasks. We will talk about each task and how the developmental stages help the teen achieve that task.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #1
ESTABLISHING SEXUAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

The search for identity, according to Erik Erikson, is the main task of adolescence. He states, "The sense of identity provides the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly." Stress can be caused by the confusion about changes within his body, his increased ability to think and reason, decisions about the future, and new freedom. Most teens welcome the changes and handle them well.

One situation that may occur is that physical growth may interfere with intellectual growth. This accounts for the young teen who suddenly drops from the honor roll to B's or makes her first C in class. This usually corrects itself as the teen becomes comfortable with her "new self."

All the changes taking place can make young adolescents uneasy. Often they fear that their usual routine and families will be changing. This could account for their need to look and act just like friends. This sameness seems to provide security at a time when they feel all eyes are focused on them.

Fads appear to play an important role in achieving a positive self-image for the teen. You may choose to veto some fads as too costly or as unhealthy. You may be wise to permit other fads which can help your youngster develop self-confidence.

Sexual changes are both exciting and frightening. Ideally, parents have told their teenager about sexual development before this time. It is important that the teen feel comfortable talking with at least one adult about the feelings he has about the physical and emotional changes that are taking place. Hormones begin racing. Both boys and girls need to understand where to place limits on behavior. Talking, flirting, holding hands, and kissing are the first stages of experimenting with sex. All this is part of exploring the sexual development that is taking place. Most parents are uneasy about the teen's curiosity about sex.

Teens do not usually accept their parents' exact value system but develop their own. Yet, if the parents have established limits on behavior and are easy to talk to, the teen's values will probably be close to those of the parent's. Teens need to know why as well as what and how. This lets them know about the parent's values.

Parents often find the teen's thinking about himself or herself annoying. Teenagers spend hours in front of the mirror. They worry about pimples, hair styles, and clothes. This time may be spent admiring or criticizing oneself.

A young teen does not know what others are thinking. What he is thinking may be different. He assumes that every other person is as concerned with his behavior and appearance as he is. His own identity is related to how he sees himself and how he thinks others see him. This explains (in part) why teens are so critical of themselves.

This preoccupation with self is the result of the young teen's style of thinking. It occurs in all children. Remember that the teen's concern with what others think is not entirely unjustified. Young teens are very critical of one another and notice details.

The young teen feels that no one has ever felt the way she does. No one understands. She usually turns to friends, rather than parents, for comfort and advice. By the time she is 15 or 16, this attitude begins to change. She is realizing that other people have similar feelings. She no longer feels that everyone is watching her all the time. The period of self-consciousness is ending and the teen is beginning to feel comfortable with herself and others.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #2
ENDING DEPENDENCE

It has been said that the two most important things parents can give children are roots and wings. The drive for independence begins when the infant crawls away from the parent to investigate a toy on the other side of the room. He comes back to the parent often just to "touch base." Then, feeling secure, he wanders off again. This is the process of roots (the security of the parent) and wings (the world outside the parents's arms).

When children are allowed to experience the world around them and make some choices and decisions for themselves, they begin to feel competent as individuals. Authoritarian parents make all the decisions and set all the rules with little or no explanations to the children. This style of parenting does not leave any room for the child to practice the skills he will need in being an independent person.

Permissive parents set no limits on a child's behavior. The child does not have to choose between anything; therefore, he does not develop sound decision-making skills. He may have problems getting along with others because he has never had to learn to give and take.

Authoritative parents set limits, but allow the child to help make rules and decisions within those limits. This style of parenting helps the child to see that other people have feelings and ideas that are important. It also gives teenagers practice in decision-making.

One of the biggest discoveries that teens make is that parents are people, too. Parents actually have needs and interests—and they will have a life after the teens are on their own. Children see parents only as they relate to their own needs. Adolescents become able to separate themselves from the rest of the family.

In order to become independent, teens must accept responsibility for and consequences of their own actions. As children learn to accept responsibility, they feel worthwhile, confident, and enjoy doing things well. When they reach adolescence, they are ready to move on to more responsibility. They have the confidence and skills to do so.

Most teens develop a belief in a kind of personal magic that will protect them from the bad things that happen to other people. Parents who understand this kind of thinking can take steps that will protect the young teen from dangers which she ignores. Belief in this personal magic, however, can make the teenage years difficult for parents and teens. Parents see by the young teen's behavior that she is neither careful nor responsible. The child, on the other hand, feels overly protected and wants to be treated as an adult. While no perfect solution exists for the problem, many parents find that giving the teen greater responsibility in non-dangerous areas (like selecting their own clothes or determining bedtime) while retaining control over more important and potentially harmful situations is helpful. It also helps to try to keep a sense of humor.

As the teen begins to think more like an adult, she is better able to form adult relationships with others. She can now think more realistically about who she is and where she fits into society. At about this time, the teen is likely to begin to re-establish the warm relationship with parents. This relationship may have become strained during the early teen years. However, parents must now be prepared to recognize that the teen thinks like an adult. The parent-child relationship can never return to what it was when the teen was a child. The task becomes one of establishing the special relationship that can exist between two adults.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #3
DEVELOPING A SENSE OF ETHICS

During late adolescence, we see a change in the teen's thinking ability. Teens develop the ability to think in abstract terms. They begin to grasp the meanings of such ideas as morality, democracy, and honesty. These new ideals can become obsessive. This accounts for the older teens who become involved with cults or religion. They are easily led by those who seem to be able to explain the mysteries of life. Teens are especially vulnerable to cults at this time if they are feeling insecure and unsure of what they believe. The members of the cults offer acceptance and standard answers. To a confused teen who does not feel very good about himself, this opportunity to belong is too good to pass up.

Parents can help children resist groups with ideas that are extreme by:

- listening to the teen's emerging values.
- knowing with whom the teen spends her time.
- setting limits for behavior and activities and enforcing rules.
- being a good example.

Example is one of the best teachers in developing a sense of ethics. When children see parents obeying laws and following standards of honesty and fairness, they are more likely to accept this set of ethics as their own. They begin to understand that rules are made to help people live peacefully with one another. Lying, cheating, stealing, and making fun of others seem wrong, not because the teen may be punished for doing them, but because others may be hurt by the actions. Some people never get to this stage of moral development. They are the ones we usually see in trouble with the legal system.

ACTIVITY 4

CAREER CHOICES

Helping those less fortunate than themselves and caring for the environment can become important causes to the older teen. Work in this area sometimes leads to a choice of careers. What opportunities exist in your community for teens to help others and to learn skills? Write your answers in Leaflet 2.

_____

_____

DEVELOPMENTAL TASK #4
EARNING A LIVING

Most teens baby sit or cut grass to earn their first spending money. They learn to be responsible to their employer. They also learn that to be hired again they must do a good job. As they get older and move on to jobs with more responsibility, they must use the skills they have learned in earlier jobs. Such habits as being on time, being truthful, and dressing neatly carry over from one situation to another.

Some people know early what they want to do with their lives. Others explore for years before they find something that is satisfying. Still others never decide. They just take what comes along.

There are many opportunities for teens to explore career opportunities. Classes in school and various part-time jobs can give young people enough experience in different areas to make decisions in career choices. Parents can encourage their teens to take advantage of the opportunities. Training after high school is usually required for any job. College,vocational schools and technical schools are reasonable options. Guidance counselors can provide leadership in helping the teen set career goals. Once the goals are set, plans can be made to reach them.

It is important to help young people think about the direction they want to take while they are still young. Even if plans change along the way, their lives are more productive if they have a goal. As the Cheshire cat in Alice In Wonderland said, "If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter much which direction you take." *(Refer to Extension programs on careers exploration, goal setting, and finding work. See reference list.)*

CONFLICTING STAGES IN THE LIFE CYCLE

Throughout life all people go through periods of growth and change. When children reach adolescence, their parents are usually middle aged. This is a time when most people look at where they are in their lives and what they have accomplished. It is a time of evaluation for many people—a time for realizing that they may not be able to reach the dreams and goals they had set. On the other hand, it may be the time that one or both parents realize that if they are to reach their own goals, they have to concentrate all their energy on the effort.

At the time parents are coming to terms with their own personal limitations, children are blossoming into independent young adults with the world at their fingertips. This realization has different effects on different parents. For some parents, this is an exciting time for the family. They help the child discover who she is and how she can deal with the changes and opportunities that are available.

Some parents are threatened by the possibilities available to young adults as they see their own possibilities lessening. This threat can get in the way of the relationship the child needs with the parent.

Before parents can deal with the changes taking place in their young adults, they have to deal with their own feelings about realities of their lives. After setting new goals and feeling comfortable about themselves, parents can then direct some of their attention to coping with the beginning of adulthood in their child.

DEALING WITH ADOLESCENCE

Parents and adolescents need to recognize each other as human beings as well as sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers. Many times, we tend to deal better with people outside the family than with those in the family because there is less emotional involvement. Focusing on the individual rather than the kinship will be helpful.

It is important to keep the lines of communication open. This suggestion is like a two-edged knife that cuts both ways. The responsibility is two-sided. This means thinking about parent responsibilities and teen responsibilities to create good communication. In doing this, it is important to remember that communication means listening as well as talking. As someone once said, "nature gave man two ears and only one tongue," which is a gentle hint that he should listen more than he talks. In Lesson 5 we will study more about communication.

ACTIVITY 5

HOMEWORK

Share with your adolescent the list of parent responsibilities and the list of teen responsibilities at the back of the leaflet. Plan time to read and discuss both lists and remember to listen between the lines as you discuss.

SUMMARY

All people deal with life better if they know what to expect. Adolescence does not have to be a stormy, unhappy time for children or parents. Knowing what to expect—and keeping a healthy sense of humor—helps everyone involved through the changes that mark the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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TEEN RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✔ Try a little understanding. Everyone needs understanding, including parents, teachers, and grandparents. It is only fair that we try to understand each other. We all have needs and feelings and reasons for decisions.

- ✔ Spend more time with your family. Encourage your family to do things together.

- ✔ Listen with an open mind when someone is trying to get a point across. See the situation from their point of view.

- ✔ Share information about yourself and your feelings with your family. They may have experienced some of the same problems and feelings you have. Give them a chance to help you.

- ✔ Initiate needed discussions on topics that are hard for your family and you to talk about.

- ✔ Be responsible. You want your family to express trust and confidence in you. It is necessary that you live up to their confidence.

- ✔ Practice courtesy, consideration, and constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is simply and gently suggesting another way to do something. It is more more helpful than destructive criticism.

- ✔ Show concern and love. Your family needs to know you care about them. They are affected by pressures and problems of everyday living just as you are. Find nice things to do and say. Try to cheer family members up when they need a lift. Everyone needs approval.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✔ Try a little understanding. Everyone needs understanding, including teens, teachers, and grandparents. It is only fair that we try to understand each other. We all have needs and feelings and reasons for decisions.

- ✔ Spend more time with your family. Encourage your family to do things together.

- ✔ Listen with an open mind when someone is trying to get a point across. See the situation from their point of view.

- ✔ Share information about yourself and your feelings with your family. They may have experienced some of the same problems and feelings you have. Give them a chance to help you.

- ✔ Initiate needed discussions on topics that are hard for your family and you to talk about.

- ✔ Be responsible. You want your family to express trust and confidence in you. It is necessary that you live up to their confidence.

- ✔ Practice courtesy, consideration, and constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is simply and gently suggesting another way to do something. It is more helpful than destructive criticism.

- ✔ Show concern and love. Your family needs to know you care about them. They are affected by pressures and problems of everyday living just as you are. Find nice things to do and say. Try to cheer family members up when they need a lift. Everyone needs approval.

NEMESIS: CHALLENGES, PRESSURES, AND RISKS

LESSON 3 IN A SERIES OF 5

OBJECTIVES

Parents will:

- understand the challenges, pressures, and risks for youth aged 13-19,
- learn signs of problems for this age group,
- learn positive steps to help deal with problems when they arise, and
- learn how to regain confidence and trust after difficult experiences with their children.

MATERIALS

Name tags
Leaflets for each participants
Chalk board or poster paper

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

There are some things in which we are all more alike than we are different. Every normal human being has needs and desires.

Everybody wants to be "somebody,"
Everybody wants to feel that they belong,
Everybody wants to feel that they make a difference, and
Everybody wants to be better than they are.

Regardless of age, if we are two or ninety-two, we have these same needs. We may go about meeting these needs in very different and sometimes misunderstood ways.

Teenage behavior may be among the most difficult to understand or predict. This is an exciting time of life when change is taking place for both the young person and his parents. This lesson has been called "Nemesis: Challenges, Pressures, and Risks" because of the stress associated with parenting teens. Nemesis is an act or effect of retribution or "getting back." Often parents and teens act as nemeses for each other.

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ACTIVITY 1

REMEMBERING WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR US

Memories are great gifts. Memories help us to appreciate, understand, and predict the future. To help with this, I am going to give you each a number from 13 to 19. When we finish numbering you will please get into groups of like numbers. In the space provided in Leaflet 3, sketch the floor plan of the home in which you lived when you were the age you have been assigned. Put an "X" where you slept.

Write the menu of a special meal you remember sharing as a family.

Now will you please try to remember what life was like for you when you were the age of the group that you are now in - when you were 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, or 19 years old? Did remembering the floor plan of your home bring back special memories?

How were you trying to prove that you were somebody? That you belonged? That you made a difference? That you really wanted to be better than you were? Here are other questions to think about.

(Have the questions on a flip chart.) Please take turns sharing memories. Do not disagree with what is being said. Just listen to each other and try to remember what you were like at the age you were assigned.

(Allow time for sharing.)

What mattered most to you?
Who were the most important people in your lives then? What difference did they make?
What was especially good and what was tough about this time in your life?

This exercise brought back a lot of memories for each of us. Some of these memories were pleasant. Some were painful. We learned that we had similar and different experiences. For the rest of the time we will be talking about how we can help young people move more smoothly from youth to young adults. We want them to make the move with satisfaction to themselves and to us as parents.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT IS LIKE FOR TEENS NOW

There are many challenges in parenting teens to young adults. Today, the world is more complicated than it was when we were teens. It is also different. When we were younger, communities were smaller. They were more personal. We likely stayed with the same group of young people from first grade through high school.

Today's families move more often. People of different cultures and values are among us. Television exposes us to violence and life styles far different from our own. It steals hours previously devoted to talking, reading, studying, and working. High technology, impersonal relationships, two parents working outside the home, single parents, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, teen suicide, automobile accidents, runaways, cults, the threat of nuclear war, unemployment, shoplifting, alcoholism, vandalism, anorexia (self-starvation), and bulimia (eating excessively and vomiting) are additional influences and choices that shape the world of today.

It is true there have been many advances that have improved the quality of life for most of us. However, we as parents often feel that the negatives that have come with change often outweigh the positives. It is easy to feel that outside focuses are more influential than

family in choices youth make. This is especially true when we read about or see on television all the bad things that are happening. As one parent recently said, "You can't take all the credit, neither can you take all the blame for how your kids turn out." Many of us really understand that statement, for we know we are not the only influences on our children.

ACTIVITY 2

RESULTING PRESSURES ON PARENTS AND TEENS

Our parents had their struggles to work through as young people and we had ours. It is helpful to think back on our own experiences and share these with our children. They will not lose respect when they hear of some of our mistakes and crazy ideas. They will feel that we are easier to talk with as we try to see life through each others eyes.

We must listen with our hearts as well as our ears when we are dealing with our teens. Much of what we hear from them, that we think of as anger, may really be words of fear. Since we have talked about what it was like for us and what it is now like for our teens, let us think together about the pressures on teens and parents today.

You may start writing down ideas in Leaflet 3. Such things as wanting to go to the beach without any grownups, or wanting your children to be able to do what others do may come to your mind.

Pressures on Teens

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Pressures on Parents

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I have two large sheets of paper here. Could we have two volunteers write for us? On one sheet we will list the major pressures on youth. On the other sheet we will list the major pressures facing parents. *(Allow time to list.)* We could continue with this activity, but we have certainly listed enough problems for teens and parents. Now I would like us to spend time thinking about whether or not these problems have to happen for every young person; also how we can tell when the pressures and problems are getting to be more than we can handle.

ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH TEENS INEVITABLE?

The Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill has been a leader in the study of youth and parents. Their findings and other research indicate that the emotional problems of teenagers may have been exaggerated. It is encouraging to learn that they found that about 85 percent of our teens grow to maturity without serious problems. Serious problems show up only in about 20 percent of all adolescents. Usually serious problems show up long before a person becomes a teenager.

ACTIVITY 3

PARENTS AND TEENS

Dr. Laurence Steinberg, Temple University, shares these five ideas about teens and parents. As you consider them think how you would vote. Thumbs up means you agree with the statement. Thumbs down, you disagree. Thumbs to the side means you do not know. Please circle the one that shows how you feel.

Yes	No	Don't Know	
			1. Adolescence must be difficult.
			2. Conflicts between teenagers and their parents are necessary.
			3. Parents and teenagers fight frequently, especially about big issues.
			4. Mothers suffer the "empty nest syndrome."
			5. Teenagers must get through adolescence on their own.

(Allow a few minutes for parents to complete the activity in the leaflet.)

How many had thumbs up for number one? Number two? Number three? Number four? Number five?

Steinberg calls each of these statements myths or mistaken ideas. Let us look at why. *(Go over the explanations below.)*

1. Adolescence must be difficult.

Research seems to show that mental problems do not occur more often during adolescence than at other times of life. Problems are not more serious when they occur in adolescence.

2. Conflicts are necessary between teenagers and their parents.

Conflicts do often separate parents and teens. However, research suggests that teens who are close to their parents do better, no matter how we measure what "better" is.

3. Parents and teenagers fight frequently, especially about "big issues."

Steinberg's research seems to show that first on the list of what teens and parents fuss about is household chores. This was true 60 years ago. Second is the friends with whom the teen spends time. Third on the list is curfew. Fourth is school work. He says that the

average teen and parents have an angry argument about twice a week. The average husband and wife have an angry argument about once a week. There appears to be no difference in the number of arguments according to whether it is a son or daughter. There is a huge difference in the number of arguments with mother and the number with father. You are right - mother gets the most.

4. Mothers suffer the "empty-nest syndrome."

This means that mother's mental health declines when the last child leaves home. Dr. Steinberg says just the opposite is true. Mother's total sense of well-being increases. If anything, it is the father who shows these reactions. The father may even develop what Steinberg calls "the empty-den syndrome."

5. Teenagers must get through adolescence on their own.

Not so, according to Steinberg. He says teenagers respond best to "authoritative" parenting. This combines warmth with setting standards, having clear expectations, and enforcing rules. He describes authoritative parents as both warm and supportive with their teenagers while being both strict and firm.

Now what do YOU think about these ideas? Remember even with research we do not "swallow" it whole. We "chew" on it. Let us express our opinions and see where we differ. *(Take about five minutes for discussion.)*

Some behavior of teens is much more aggravating to parents than it is serious for the teen. Some behavior is so serious that professional help is required. Your children are the lucky ones for you are trying to learn the difference.

HOW CAN WE TELL WHEN PROBLEMS ARE SERIOUS?

Most parents worry about teenage years. They worry because of what they read and hear about. On the other hand, parents may think that the bad things they hear about can never happen to one of their children. We may not recognize symptoms of problem behavior as they occur. After a serious problem we look back and wonder why we did not see what was happening all along. One 29-year-old alcoholic told his family that he began drinking vodka at age 13. They now recall the earlier symptoms to which they did not pay attention.

The following signs of serious problems have been developed from many resources. These signs were developed from study, experience, parents of teens who have experienced problems, and teens themselves. Discussing these signs should help us be more aware but not more suspicious of teen behavior. There is a fine line here that requires your best thinking.

SIGNS OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR TEENS

- A noticeable change in usual behavior. Examples are lack of interest in other people, long periods of staying alone, sleeping all the time, or not sleeping.

- Mood swings. Examples are being extremely angry or extremely quiet and being almost too easy to get along with.

- Physical changes. Examples are lack of energy or too much energy, slurred speech, bloodshot eyes, change in appetite and resulting sudden weight gain or loss, frequent headaches, and needle marks on the arms or legs.

- Change of interest in school. Examples are poor grades, absenteeism, problems with teachers, loss of friends or no friends, frequent fights and explosions of anger, notes or phone calls suggesting that your child has become a problem or a misfit at school.

- Disappearance of money and or possessions, appearance of money or new possessions unaccounted for.

- Increasing lack of communication and a lack of openness coupled with unexplained absences from home.

You may be able to handle some of these behaviors if they appear. Some you may be able to handle with the help of friends, family, and support groups. Some may require help for the entire family from counselors and other professionals.

When one of our children is physically ill, we do not need to blame ourselves or feel ashamed to seek help from the doctor. Neither do we ignore serious symptoms and think that the illness will go away. We go for help from a source we trust. We do all that we can to provide the needed medicine and care when the teen is physically ill. Why should we be less able to seek help with behavioral and relationship problems?

CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE

We have not yet considered some of the important things that are happening to you as adults. Self understanding is basic to understanding others. At about the time your children are reaching their prime as teenagers, your energy may be dwindling. You may be facing disappointments in your career or marriage.

Now you may be parents to your own parents and feel pulls from two generations. Further, you may be facing the loss of close family members. You may be a single parent. At times there may be some feelings of jealousy. These feelings may stem from your children having more than you had at their age. You worked hard for what you had while they put forth little effort. They may seem to show little appreciation for what they have.

POSITIVE STEPS TO PREVENT AND DEAL WITH PROBLEMS

1. Develop a stable, nurturing home situation.

The basic source of stability for young people is their family. In a speech before the U.S. Senate, Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University spoke of his studies of the same youth over time. He said that the teenagers who had major problems during their teen years came from what he calls "disorganized households." These are homes where there is little consistency or routine. Such things as clean clothes, hot meals, or money for school needs are not there for them. Young people need to know what they can count on from parents as much as parents need to know what they can expect from children. A sense of order, routine, and structure is essential to positive growth. This does not mean being rigid. It means creating a loving and accepting situation that makes your teen know that he is important to you.

2. Develop a strong husband and wife relationship when both are present.

Research, common sense, and experience tell us that children whose parents have a strong husband and wife relationship usually do not have major problems. So often we focus on the needs of children and forget the original two in the nest. Children can be

dividers as well as unifiers. Hopefully husbands and wives will still be together when children are no longer there. When this relationship is neglected, everyone suffers. (Single parents need to seek strong support from other adults, church, and community groups.)

3. Develop "What If" discussions with family members.

It is good that we cannot look into the future and see problems ahead. If we could, we might become overly concerned about the future and the present. However, it can be helpful to look at what may happen in the future with teens. The following story will explain how this can help.

> Jim had moved frequently with his mother, father, and older sister. He entered eighth grade in a new city and was anxious to make friends. He found that the group with whom he would like to associate was rather closed to newcomers. There was another group that readily took him in, and he accepted. Soon they decided to skip school. Jim's parents had entrusted him with a key to the house, but one of the firm rules was there were to be no visitors inside the house while parents were absent. Jim had more advantages than some of the group, three boys and two girls. They wanted to go to his house and he wanted them to know where he lived so he yielded to their wishes. They walked the four miles quickly and were hungry and thirsty upon arrival. Jim offered refreshments and then they asked to see the rest of the house.
>
> The behavior quickly got out of control. Closets were entered. Clothing was thrown down the laundry chute. A comforter on the parent's bed was slashed with a knife. Jim began to protest, was tricked outside the house, and the door was locked to keep him out. Cigarettes were smoked, holes were burned in the carpet, hardware was broken on two bedroom doors, and water overflowed in the bathroom. When Jim was allowed back in the house, he was shocked and upset. He began to try to restore order. His "buddies" left him.
>
> Over $5,000 damage was done to an almost new home, and the heartbreak experienced by this family was great. Jim said that he never expected things to turn out like this.

If this family had discussed and planned, this might not have occurred. Jim needed help in dealing with such problems as:

> What if you find it hard to make friends at school?
>
> What if you find that you are getting in with the wrong group?
>
> What if you get into a situation that gets out of hand?
>
> What will you say to your friends or friend? What will you do? Who can help? How will you feel after it is all over? How will your family feel? Will you be willing and able to take the responsibility for your decision?

ACTIVITY 4

DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Wise parents discuss with teenagers dangerous situations in which teenagers may find themselves. Together they can make lists of steps to be taken if they find themselves in such situations. In Leaflet 3 write about one dangerous or troubling situation a teen may find in your community.

Situation Description

_____

Steps to be Taken

1._____.

2._____

3._____

Did you list the following situations?

What if you find that the driver of the car in which you went to a party is too drunk to drive?

What if your best friend is at the mall with you and does some shoplifting?

What if you are told, "If you really love me, you will go all the way."?

You can easily think of many other tough situations young people face. Planning and thinking ahead, even practicing what will be said, is a tremendous reinforcement. This helps the young person think through the situation, the possible results, and the after effects. It also helps families prove they can count on each other.

4. Use Community Resources and Support

Single parents and families where divorce and remarriage have taken place have their own unique challenges. All families need other people to help them in meeting their needs. As Barbra Streisand says so well "People, people who need people are the luckiest people in the world." There are many times when an adult outside your family who is not emotionally involved can help you make it. A school teacher, church youth leader, a 4-H Leader, or a family friend may be the one who sometimes can deal more realistically with tough situations for your teen. Ask for their help.

5. Have as few rules as possible. Be consistent and realistic in expectations.

There are some things that are firm and non-negotiable in most families. These basic rules represent values for which you stand. Other rules probably need to be re-examir as young people show more ability to take responsibility for their own behavior. Helping young people to become self-disciplined is the aim of parenting.

ACTIVITY 5

Most of us can recall someone outside our family who was a special support during our growing up years. Write their names in your leaflet, and jot down some things you would like to say to them.

A person who helped me was_____.

Here is a note of appreciation:

_____

_____

_____

ACTIVITY 6

RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS AFTER SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Life must go on. How will Jim's parents ever feel that they can trust him again? How will Jim be convinced that he has been forgiven? Will there be a tendency to bring up the past? Let us discuss these questions, or you may jot down your ideas in your leaflet.

What would you do if you were Jim's parents?

_____

_____

What would you do if you were Jim's sister?

_____

_____

Who else could be of help?

_____

_____

Tough situations can lead to increased individual and family growth instead of physical and emotional harm.

Jim will have to re-earn his parent's confidence. He must show them through his behavior that he can assume responsibility and independence.

All family members need to participate in the crisis. All are affected. All need to share their feelings, to forgive, and move ahead. A crisis can make a strong family stronger.

There is no value in looking back and saying "if only." Learn from the situation and say "next time." The important thing is to get through the crisis without serious emotional or physical damage, if possible. Parents must also erase doubt and lack of confidence. JIM MUST KNOW THAT THEY COUNT ON HIM AND BELIEVE IN HIM if he is to restore his own self-confidence. What else do you think needs to be done?

ACTIVITY 7

HOMEWORK

Talk to your teen about dangerous situations in which she may find herself. Ask how she would handle the situations you have listed in the leaflet.

SUMMARY

Adolescence does not have to be a stormy time. If young people are involved in worthwhile activities, if there is good communication among family members, and if there is time for family members to be together and apart, the years in which a family has teenagers may be among the most satisfying times of all.

WHAT NEXT?

The next lesson will be about helping your teen learn to make wise decisions.

RESOURCES

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EVALUATION: VALUES, GOALS, AND DECISIONS

LESSON 4 IN A SERIES OF 5

OBJECTIVES

Parents will:

- increase awareness and empathy for teens' life situation with regard to values, goals, and decisions,
- increase knowledge of the process of forming values, goals, and decision-making,
- learn skills that foster independent thinking and responsible behavior, and
- identify values, goals, and decision-making processes that mesh with their own beliefs about parenting.

MATERIALS

Leaflet 4 for each participant
Name tags
Magic markers
Tape
Paper
Pencils
Chalk and chalkboard

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Parents are sometimes unaware of when and how they influence the values and beliefs of adolescents. The goal of this lesson is to develop an awareness of values, goals, and decisions that parents may convey to their adolescents. In some ways, parents and adolescents are alike: both may be experiencing an identity crisis relating to their values, authority, emotional adjustment, and sexuality. In other ways, parents and adolescents are different - in their personalities and in basic orientation to life.

Most books on adolescence note that it is a time of identity crisis. Remember from Lesson 2 and Lesson 3 that parents of adolescents may be in a middle-age identity crisis themselves. This often produces conflict within families. Parents may be asking: Who am I, what have I accomplished, where am I now, and what does the future hold? The tasks and problems often interlock causing conflict.

A conflict may erupt between parent and adolescent values. Also, the parent may experience a value conflict within himself. You as a parent may have grown up with traditional values that are questioned by the adolescent. The teen may be questioning the values that she has grown up with and, at the same time, coming into contact with other teens who may have grown up

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with very different values. The adolescent may begin to rethink values, which may be shocking for the parent. The adult may react in a rigid authoritarian way as he tries to convince himself and his adolescent that he is right. At other times the parent may "give in" to a slight challenge from the adolescent. This may be confusing and cause the adolescent to lose respect for the parent.

ACTIVITY 1

CONFLICTS REMEMBERED

We have been discussing values, parents and adolescents. Think back to your own adolescence. Was it a stormy time of conflict with your parents or was it relatively calm? Take a few minutes to reflect back to those years.

In Leaflet 4 jot down some of the conflicts that you remember experiencing with your parents. Beside the first list, write some of the conflicts that you may be experiencing with your adolescent.

CONFLICTS WITH MY PARENTS	CONFLICTS WITH MY TEENS
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(Ask for responses from parents to list in column 1 on the chalk board. The title at the top of column 1 will be "Conflicts." At the top of column 2 write "Values" on the chalkboard. As a group, try to discover what values are represented in each conflict. There is often a linkage from conflict to values.)

What are ways to group the conflicts and values? Research indicates there are five major areas. These center on values in the following areas:

Social life-friends or dating partners; choice of clubs, activities; how often the adolescent is allowed to go out; age allowed to date, ride in cars; choice of clothes and hair style.

Responsibility-performance of family chores; earning and spending money; care of personal belongings, room; use of family car, telephone, or other family property.

School - grades and level of performance/potential, study habits, homework, regularity of attendance, behavior in school.

Family relationships - general attitude, level of respect shown parents, relationships with siblings or other relatives.

Morals - use of drugs, drinking or smoking, language and speech, basic honesty, sexual behavior, behavior in regard to laws.

VALUES

Values are the deep-rooted beliefs you have about what is good and desirable about the way you live. They grow out of your experiences at home, church, school, or in the community.

A recent national report, "What Works: Schools Without Drugs," states as a federal objective that adolescents build a solid value system as an important link in the chain of drug prevention education. Adolescents need to learn proper values and stand by them amid peer pressure, according to the report.

ACTIVITY 2

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorm with a partner about what the outcomes of the values and conflicts might be. Choose one item from each listed in Activity 1 *(social life, responsibility, school, family relations, morals)*. What factors that are listed in Leaflet 4 might cause a variation in the outcome of a conflict?

The following list of factors have been shown in research to play a part:

Age of adolescent - Girls may be in value conflict with their parents over boy friends from age twelve up, with peak years at 14 and 15. For boys, the peak age of this value conflict is 16.

Gender of adolescent - Same gender conflicts intensify in adolescence.

Type of parenting style - Authoritarian homes are reported to have more value conflict about money, friends, and social life than authoritative homes. *(See Lesson 2 for definitions of authoritarian and authoritative.)*

Economic level of family - Middle-income families are more concerned with developing independence and initiative, while low socioeconomic families are often more concerned with obedience, politeness, and respect.

Almost all adolescents want parents to have a genuine interest in them. They want attention, though not necessarily companionship from their parents. Friends and peers are very important to the adolescent. Adolescents value parents who really listen, try to understand, and allow them time to express themselves.

GOALS

What are goals? A goal is what an individual or group is trying to accomplish; it is the object or aim of an action. Even the very young have goals though they may not be able to state them in words. Have you ever watched an infant placed on a blanket on the floor who scoots, reaches, and stretches toward a bright-colored object placed beyond reach. That is goal-directed behavior! As human beings mature, their goals usually become more clear and mature as well.

Goals are aims toward which individuals and families are willing to work. They provide direction in life. No two families will have the same goals because no two families are exactly alike.

Each of us uses goals to organize our lives. Goals provide a basic framework for making many decisions. Goals relate to the way we live, spend time, and spend money. As was stated in Task 4 in Lesson 2, "If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter much which direction you take." The main point of goal setting is to decide what you want.

Goals change over time and that is to be expected. Some goals will be achieved and some may not if they are set too high or too low. Goals should be revised periodically. Helping an adolescent learn goal setting is a crucial task for any parent. Research has shown that adolescents with positive goals are more successful in coping with life.

Goals evolve from values - your ideas about what is important and worthwhile to you. Values are the deep-rooted beliefs you have about what is good and desirable about the way you live. Each family member needs to develop an awareness of values and goals. This requires personal investigation - talking and sharing feelings much as we did in Activity 1 and 2. Allow all family members time to answer questions before a family meeting. Select a time for a family discussion when all members are rested and relaxed. Plan to spend about an hour exploring goals and values that are important to your individual family. Encourage all family members to participate.

ACTIVITY 3

TEACHING ABOUT GOALS

The process of teaching about goals involves several steps. This series of questions will help you and your adolescent identify goals to be achieved or problems to be solved and information to be obtained. Together examine the possible options, consider the consequences of each, and select the best option. Goal setting combines current wants with delayed choices for future enjoyment. In Leaflet 4, write one goal that your family has. (Allow time for this activity.) Think through the following questions.

Is the goal realistic? Is the goal possible?

Is the goal worthwhile? Is the goal compatible with your values?

What will you be giving up to accomplish the goal? How will you benefit from the goal? How will your life change as a result of reaching the goal?

Is the goal something you want? Or is it something that someone else wants for you? People are more dedicated to achieving goals when the goals are their own choice or when they have a part in the goal-setting process.

Is the goal specific? How can you measure progress toward achieving the goal? Can you determine when you have reached it?

Does the goal have a completion date? Can you reach the goal in the time specified? Goals are easier to complete within a time frame for most people. A sense of accomplishment will develop as you complete goals.

ACTIVITY 4

SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM GOALS

What are some individual and family goals? The following activity may help you identify some of your most important individual and family goals. Complete the following activity in Leaflet 4, and then try the same activity with your adolescent and discuss it at a mutually convenient time.

Directions: List short- and long-term goals in the following spaces . An example is given for each type of goal. If there is not enough space to list all the goals you are considering, add an additional page.

SHORT-TERM GOALS	VALUES
Provide tutoring for chemistry	Increase sense of competence for adolescent Education

LONG-TERM GOALS	VALUES
Graduate from High School	Increase sense of competence for adolescent Education and better job possibilities

Goals represent a life plan. Attaining goals reflects and enhances the way we feel about ourselves. The methods we use to set goals and develop plans to reach them may vary. What is important is to develop a goal-setting process. Once goals based on values have been set, decisions fall into place because life has been given direction and focus.

DECISION-MAKING

"To be or not to be" - that is the question and has been since before Shakespeare's time. Most of us can recall the feeling we had as teens as we confronted some of the first major decisions of our lives. Questions that called for decisions about sex, smoking, cheating, and other values dominated our teen years. Fear, guilt, bewilderment, and anxiety probably entered into the mixture of feelings surrounding such decisions. Some things never change, while at the same time many, many things have changed. Many choices face today's adolescent. However, the process of making decisions has remained from our teen years to our teen's years.

Decision-making involves an awareness of personal values, the values of others, and how values affect the decision-making process. Skills in decision-making are important. Research evidence suggests that these skills help adolescents manage developmental tasks, situational stress, and inhibit patterns of self-destructive behavior including substance abuse.

What is a decision? A decision is a choice to do one thing instead of another. All of us, parents and teens alike, encounter decisions daily that can be grouped into four categories:

A. Decisions not under my control
B. Automatic or routine decisions
C. Decisions thought about or needing more investigation
D. Decisions postponed until more information is available

ACTIVITY 5

HOW IMPORTANT ARE DECISIONS?

Have decisions you made recently been easy? Did you have to spend a lot of time thinking about them? Did you have to find other information before you could decide? If you are thinking about purchasing a new car or home, there are many decisions that you will face. For an adolescent, trying to decide whether to go to a four-year college or a two-year technical school is a major decision. A skilled decision-maker develops more alternatives from which to choose and has a better chance of achieving positive results.

All of us make decisions every day. Some are more important than others. Decisions can be thought about in terms of the types given in Leaflet 4.

0 - I have no control over this decision.

1 - I make this decision automatically. I do not have to think about it.

2 - I think about this one a little before I make it.

3 - I think about it a lot, but do not need to find out anything else.

4 - I study about it and ask others what they think about it.

5 - I study, think, and ask others about this one.

Here are decisions a teen might have to make. As you read the list, decide how you think your teen would make them. Write the code number you choose after each decision.

Decision	Code
1. To believe in God.	
2. To drop out of school.	
3. To apply for a part-time job.	
4. To go to a movie.	
5. To tell the truth to a friend.	
6. To talk about someone behind her back.	

WHAT IS DECISION-MAKING?

Decision-making is the process of considering alternative solutions to a situation and then selecting the one that seems best. This means that you, either consciously or unconsciously, develop a system to rate alternatives. You need to decide from information you have gathered how desirable each alternative will be. Next, you weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

After weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each option, you are ready to choose the one that seems more desirable than all the others to help you reach your goal.

The keys to making a good choice are a clear, unbiased method of gathering information about more than one alternative and an understanding of how you will rate each option.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The steps in the decision-making process are similar, regardless of whether the decision involves family or individuals. These steps include:

1. Recognize and define the problem. Recognizing the need for change is the most important step in decision-making. Sometimes it is difficult to recognize the real problem. Sometimes an "outside" person, a neutral third party such as a minister or counselor, may be helpful in recognizing the real problem. It is important to identify the real problem, not just the symptoms. When the problem is identified, you will be on the road to solving the problem.

2. Consider your goals. Remember the activity where you identified your long- and short-term goals? Use that information as you proceed in the decision-making process. As you make decisions, it is important to learn the skill of selecting what is important to you.

3. Look for alternatives. Make sure you look for as many alternatives as possible to solve the problem - not just the obvious ones. Creative thinking, reading, and talking to other people may uncover additional choices.

4. Analyze alternatives and consider consequences. One of the key elements of decision-making is looking ahead to determine "what might happen if ....." Consider the resources needed to carry out each alternative. How much time, money, skill, energy, and knowledge will be required? What must be given up? Every decision has an element of risk. You want to reduce risk as much as possible; however, reduction of all risks is impossible.

5. Make a decision. Look realistically at the possible alternatives and select the one that seems best for you in terms of your values, goals, available resources, and risks. If there is no "best" solution, perhaps a new alternative can be created by compromising or combining several of the options.

6. Implement the decision. Making a decision does not end with selecting the best alternative. After a decision is made, you have to put the decision into action. This requires an action plan that defines who has to do what, when, and where. Then the plan must be put to work.

7. Evaluate and accept responsibility. Accept the responsibility for the decision and the consequences without excuses. You will need to develop a way to make sure that the action plan decided upon is solving the problem and reaching the intended goal. If the plan extends over a period of time, it is wise to evaluate the decision at certain check points in a time schedule. If the results are positive, you should continue with your plan. However, if you find that your decision is not achieving the results you expected, you may need to adjust your plans.

ACTIVITY 6

DECISION-MAKING STRATEGY HOMEWORK

The homework activity, "Decision-Making Strategy" in Leaflet 4, will help you understand the decision-making process. Individually or as a family, select a problem that needs to be solved and work through steps 1-7.

1. Define the problem. (What is the conflict or what issues are involved?)

_____

_____

2. Alternatives? What are the alternative solutions?

_____

_____

3. Identify consequences and risks associated with remaining alternatives.

_____

_____

Alternative No.____

Positive Consequences_____

_____

Negative Consequences_____

_____

Alternative No.____

Positive Consequences_____

_____

Negative Consequences_____

_____

4. Identify personal values influencing the decision. Identify any group or peer pressures that may influence the decision._____

_____

_____

5. What are the available resources to carry out the decision? _____

_____

_____

6. Make your decision and list your reasons for this choice._____

_____

_____

7. What is the action plan? What steps will you take to carry out your decision?

_____

_____

_____

SUMMARY

Decision-making skills can be improved by practice and can make a big difference in your life and in your family's life. Decision-making helps you get the things you really want. The key factor is "making things happen" instead of just "letting things happen." The importance of helping your adolescent define values and establish goals will have a life-long impact.

WHAT NEXT?

In the next lesson, we will be discussing Conflict Resolution. You will learn ways to resolve conflicts. Before the next lesson, think about major conflicts that you would like to find creative ways to resolve.

RESOURCES

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Have
you
ever
just
wanted
to
be
told
you
did
something
good?
You
have?
Gee!
How
about
trying
it
out
on
me?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

LESSON 5 IN A SERIES OF 5

OBJECTIVES

Parents will:

- become aware of parenting responsibilities,
- explore the importance of understanding feelings and needs of family members,
- set family rules and limits,
- recognize adolescents' need for positive self-concepts,
- recognize that parent-adolescent conflict can be healthy, and
- develop and reinforce communication skills.

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

When people live together conflicts are bound to occur. A conflict is a disagreement. It is normal that parents and adolescents will not always think the same. However, it is important to work to resolve family problems as they occur. If not resolved, minor concerns may become major problems.

Solving problems within the family is not always smooth and easy. Often disappointments or conflicts occur because parents and adolescents expect different things. This lesson will help parents gain skills in handling conflict.

ACTIVITY 1

SHARING TIME

Your homework assignment was to choose a problem and work through the decision-making steps. How helpful do you think this skill will be? Did you teach it to your teen? Who would like to share?

RESEARCH

There is disagreement about whether adolescence normally produces more conflict than any other life stage (Hall, 1987). However, a high degree of conflict between parents and their adolescent is not healthy for the adolescent's emotional growth. Sometimes serious conflict causes a parent to physically and verbally abuse the adolescent. When this happens the adolescent may move away from home before he is capable of living responsibly on his own.

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More disagreements between parent and child occur in early adolescence than before or after. Quarreling does not have to result in ending the relationship.

For parents of 10- to 12-year-olds, inconsistent and ineffective discipline result in high levels of problem behavior. The child's behavior and lack of skills may lead the child to be rejected by desirable friends. He may be forced to associate with similar unskilled, and antisocial children. (Antisocial behavior is not being able to get along with others, not being able to accept authority, and not being able to work within the systems of society.)

In early to mid-adolescence, teens tend to associate with friends who are like themselves in areas such as age, sex, race, grade, neighborhood, drug use, school performance, dating frequency, and religious and educational aspirations. Those individuals who enter adolescence with a lack of social and academic skills are likely to choose friends like themselves.

Careful watching by parents, along with firm discipline, does reduce association with deviant peers (troubled teens)! Problem teen behavior includes use of drugs, irresponsible sexual behavior, and school drop-out. Prevention is far less painful than cure.

In later adolescence, association with troubled teens happens most often when parents or adults are absent. Teens seem to sense that parents would not approve of certain types of individuals. Somehow they manage to be around undesirable peers when parents are absent.

It is probable that severe problems of teenagers begin before adolescence. Sometimes conflict between parents and teens can arise over unimportant issues. In Lesson 3 we learned signs that let us know when teens may be in serious trouble. It is important to tell the difference between minor arguments and ones that could have long-range results.

Whether the arguments are minor or serious, the following conflict management skills will help family members cope with their differences.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The four main skills in conflict management are described in the paragraphs that follow.

1. Diagnosing the problem

Just what is a diagnosis? In sickness, a diagnosis is what the doctor tells you the problem is. In families we also have to diagnose. We have to determine what the problem is when there is conflict. The first step in conflict management is figuring out what the problem is and whether it is serious. Will it have a long-lasting effect?

For example, you and your teen may have different ideas about how clean she should keep her room. You must determine if this is serious.

2. Confronting the problem

The key is to look at the effects. What could happen as a result of an untidy room? If it is a normal day, you may decide that the problem is not serious enough for a confrontation. If, on the other hand, a prospective buyer is coming to look at your house, you may decide the problem must be handled.

If you do decide to confront the problem, the way you approach your teenager can determine whether you will be able to discuss the problem calmly and successfully. The most effective way to confront your teen is usually to begin by telling her what negative effects the problem has on you.

For example, say, "I have a problem and I need your help in solving it. The realty agent is bringing someone by to look at the house today. Your room needs cleaning up and I do not have time to do it. Neither do I feel that it is my responsibility to clean your room. The cleaner the house, the easier it will sell. Can you help with this problem?"

3. Listening to each other

You must be willing to listen to the other person's point of view. You must be flexible enough to accept solutions other than the "perfect" ones that may occur to you. Someone said parents of teens must be like a willow tree that is able to bend with the wind. A willow tree survives more storms than an oak tree that cannot bend as much.

By showing your teen you are willing to listen to her and that you are willing to compromise, you can encourage her to do the same. You will be setting an example that she may pattern during her life. We will discuss more about listening later in the lesson.

4. Using problem-solving skills

Work together to come up with ways you can solve the conflict. Go for a compromise rather than going to win. *(The steps in problem solving listed in the lesson 1 can be used here.)*

In the case of the untidy room, for example, your teen may really not have time to clean it right then. She may offer to do a certain task for you at a later time if you will clean the room for her. If she does make a bargain with you, insist that she keeps the deal.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have learned how to go about resolving conflict, try the techniques in your own situation. Remember, it may be tough and take some time, but it will be worth it in the end.

Be patient. Do not pout and do not walk out on the discussion! If you become angry, say, "I'm feeling angry now. However, it's important to me that we work this problem out, and I want us to continue to do that. I need to have time to gain my composure. Let's continue talking about this tomorrow at such-and-such time."

A caring tone of voice and a positive attitude about solving the problem will be helpful.

If you end the discussion, it is your responsibility to bring it up again at the agreed-upon time. Once begun, continue to work on the solution until you come to an understanding.

Remember, you must work together and all involved must be flexible. Do not expect to have everything work out exactly as you would like. Remember, if one of you wins all, the other loses all.

LIMITS

Of course there are some decisions that parents cannot let teens help make. These are not negotiable. Until the teen is of legal age or until he leaves home, the parent is the one who is legally responsible for the teen's behavior. Young people want limits. Parents must set limits. Indifferent or unsure parents leave teenagers without the support they need to stand up to the peer pressure they experience. Laws and rules that must be obeyed are non-negotiable.

Non-negotiables are most effective when kept to a few items that deal with safety and deeply held family values. Adolescents respect firmness if the few non-negotiables are carefully chosen. Parents should explain clearly the consequences of violating non-negotiable rules and limits. Consequences should reflect the kind and extent of the violation. Rules, limits, and consequences should hold adolescents responsible for their behavior.

Non-negotiable limits are rules that are necessary for physical safety or that reflect strongly held family values. Examples are "no riding with drivers who are drinking" and "not going to parties that are unattended by parents or other adults." Non-negotiable limits are most effective when kept to a minimum and when the reasons behind them have been thoroughly considered and discussed.

Family well-being and the adolescent's need for learning to make his own decisions—autonomy—must be considered. This is especially true when making decisions on both negotiables and non-negotiables.

The teen can help make decisions involving expected behaviors. These could include curfew, homework, household chores, and dress.

Negotiables and non-negotiables should be re-evaluated regularly as the adolescent grows and matures. Rules can change!

It is most difficult for parents to decide how to give teens freedom enough to learn responsibility and self-reliance. It is a challenge to do this and still control behavior that is potentially damaging to the teen.

One couple wanted their teenager to be mature enough to live at home his last year of high school as another adult in the home. This had been their goal since the child was born. They really tried to treat the teen as an adult as often as possible. A real adult-to-adult friendship was the result. This did not happen overnight. These parents had worked hard to give this young man responsibilities just as fast as he demonstrated his ability to handle them all along. How do you feel about this family?

GUIDELINES FOR LIMITS

Here are guidelines to use once you have figured out the negotiables and the non-negotiables.

1. Remember, rules must be enforced. Can you and the rest of your family live with the rules and limits?

2. Have a minimum of rules.

3. Be sure rules and limits are logical and sound. Be willing to explain your reasons to your adolescent in a nondefensive manner.

4. Expect rules to be followed. When they are not, make it a learning experience. Do not convey the message that the adolescent is a failure. But do not excuse or ignore unacceptable behavior.

5. All rules and limits should be realistic and attainable. Always remember needs and abilities of the adolescent and family when establishing rules.

6. Rules and limits should be open for discussion as you see signs of adolescents accepting more responsibility and requesting more independence.

ACTIVITY 2

CONFRONTATIONS

There are many opportunities for confrontations between parents and adolescents. Examples are located in Leaflet 5. Circle "yes" or "no" by each confrontation in your leaflet.

Yes No 1. A 15-year-old boy brings his girlfriend home for dinner and then takes her up to his bedroom. Should his parents make him leave the door open?

Yes No 2. Should parents allow a 14-year old girl to go to school braless?

Yes No 3. A 16-year-old girl wants to get birth control information from a family doctor. Should her parents call the doctor and tell her not to see their daughter?

Yes No 4. A 12-year-old boy steals a bike. His parents make him return the stolen bike. Do they have the right to insist that he go to the police and confess?

Yes No 5. A 13-year-old boy keeps love poems he has written to his girl friend locked in a drawer in his bedroom until he finds the right time to give them to her. The parents find out about the poems and discover the key to the drawer. Should they read the poems?

Scenarios such as these were given to 1,002 residents of Los Angeles who ranged in age from 17 to 94. About 42 percent of them were parents. The respondents were asked whether they backed the parental action taken in each situation. Following are the percentages who backed or did not back the parental actions— see how they compare with your feelings about the rights of adolescents:

1. The girlfriend in the bedroom: 84 percent agreed that the parents had the right to make the 15-year-old boy keep his bedroom door open.

2. The girl going braless to school: 71 percent said the parents had the right to keep her from going to school braless.

3. The girl who wants the doctor to give her birth control information: 70 percent sided with the girl and felt she had the right to obtain birth control information from the family physician. Note that the survey did not investigate the issue presently being heard in many state courts—whether parents should be notified before their adolescent daughters can obtain abortions.

4. The bike-stealing incident: 52 percent supported the boy who did not want to confess to the police.

5. The boy who wrote the love poems: 83 percent said the parents did not have the right to see the poems.

The majority of the persons replying supported firm parental monitoring and guidance in matters pertaining to adolescents' sex lives. Adolescents are more likely to be given autonomy in issues pertaining to religion, educational choices, and personal grooming (Borhnaledt, Freeman, and Smith, 1981: Corey, 1982).

COMMUNICATION

The next step in our growth as parents of teens is to fine tune communication skills. This will make conflict resolution and limit setting easier.

1. Giving "I" messages helps avoid placing blame. These messages offer us a chance to express our feelings about the behavior in question and help teenagers to understand our expectations. These messages may also offer teenagers a chance to explain their behavior and hopefully express a desire to change.

When using "I" messages, it is a good idea to state the behavior that you are referring to by starting with the phrase "When you _____," followed by "I feel _____," and ending with "because _____ _____."

One parent said to her 15-year-old when he came home late from school, "I worry when you come home late because I don't know if you are safe."

This "I" message includes three main parts:
1. The feeling: I worry
2. The behavior: when you come home late
3. The reason for the feeling: because I don't know you are safe.

ACTIVITY 3

"I" MESSAGES

We can already think of many situations where "I" messages would have been more effective than placing blame squarely on the shoulders of our teenagers. Read the example in Leaflet 5 and respond with an "I" message.

Tina insists on playing her new stereo as loudly as it will play every evening while she and her younger brother are doing their homework. Her mother objects to this behavior. How should mother express her objection? Write your response in Leaflet 5.

_____

_____

(Suggested response - I feel nervous when you play your stereo so loudly. I believe we can concentrate better without it.)

2. Practice makes perfect. As we communicate on a daily basis with our teenagers, we should take time to think about what we say before we say it. This will prevent us from saying something we do not really mean. We may even practice what we are going to say beforehand. If parents get into the habit of practicing first, when emotionally charged situations arise we will carefully avoid saying something which may cause sorrow later.

ACTIVITY 4

EMOTIONALLY CHARGED SITUATIONS

There are situations that may be especially charged with emotion when communicating with teenagers. Let us make a list of these situations so that when they occur we can remind ourselves to STOP and THINK BEFORE WE SPEAK.

LIST THEM BELOW

_____

_____

_____

_____

(After everyone has had a minute to think, you may want to write the situations on the blackboard or artist pad as the parents share their ideas. Some of the situations may deal with sexuality, members of the opposite sex, or a parent who no longer lives with the family.)

3. Make sure you let teens know what is most important to you.

Many times when talking with teens, a number of subjects come up. It is very important to let teenagers know what is important to us. However, it is a good idea to focus on one idea at a time. We must remember that we are letting our teenagers know what we expect. We are helping them to develop a value system that should be based on what we think will help them to develop into productive adults.

Therefore, it is a good idea to always provide some kind of summary or conclusion when talking with teenagers. You may even question them to see if they are understanding your point of view and if they are in agreement with it.

4. Be direct and to the point.

Teenagers appreciate short messages. Long messages may be completely blocked out of their minds. Aim for results. Let your teenagers know exactly what you want. If it is a task to be completed, tell them what, how, when, and where, if necessary, in as brief a format as possible.

5. Observe signs of readiness to communicate.

There should be as few distractions as possible. Pick your times to talk with your teenagers. If your son is preoccupied with an important activity, this may not be a good time to talk.

6. Sometimes it is better to write it down.

When emotions are strong and the subject is painful, you may choose to put your feelings in a letter. People are usually impressed when you think enough of them to put your feelings in writing. This can be used with problems as well as with expressions of pride and joy.

LISTENING—THE KEY TO PREVENTION

Many troubled teens say that they just want someone to listen and really understand what they are saying.

Remembering the tips that follow will help us to be the listeners our teenagers want us to be.

1. Focus your attention entirely on the person talking. Listen as if you are hanging on every word. This does not cost you anything, but think of the cost of being uninformed about this most important person and his daily goings and comings. Think of the confidence you build by letting your teen know he commands your attention when he talks.

2. Avoid interrupting your teen. Asking questions is good because they help to improve your understanding. However, parents should try not to interrupt the teen's train of thought. It is very important to always work towards improving the lines of communication. If a person is having to defend what he is saying, he cannot be open minded.

3. Encourage small talk ... sometimes this is a teenagers way of warming up for a very important conversation.

IDEA

Work up an agreement or contract with your adolescent on one or more behaviors. What do you need to do to support your adolescent during the contract period? What will you negotiate? Can you both give a little bit?

SUMMARY

Parents need to be sensitive to their child's need for a balance between security and freedom. Family unity is most important as a kind of backup support when the teenager is trying to sort out issues that may be confusing to him.

ACTIVITY 5

REFLECTION

Now is a good time to reflect on the skills you have learned in these five lessons. Write about some of them in Leaflet 5.

I have learned that:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(Give post test here.)

ADDITIONAL HELPS AND REFERENCES

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Peanut butter
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When
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soul.
Thanks
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day.